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Lutz Niethammer *The Infancy of Tarzan*

Benjamin Markovits *Bisexual Byron*

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Between Norms and Accomplished Facts

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HAL FOSTER: On the First Pop Age

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TARIQ ALI

THE COLOUR KHAKI

*Now each day is fair and balmy,
Everywhere you look: the army.
Ustad Daman (1959)*

ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2001, General Pervaiz Musharraf went on TV to inform the people of Pakistan that their country would be standing shoulder to shoulder with the United States in its bombardment of Afghanistan. Visibly pale, blinking and sweating, he looked like a man who had just signed his own death warrant. The installation of the Taliban regime in Kabul had been the Pakistan Army's only foreign-policy success. In 1978, the US had famously turned to the country's military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq when it needed a proxy to manage its jihad against the radical pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan. In what followed, the Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence became an army within an army, with much of its budget supplied directly from Washington. It was the ISI that supervised the Taliban's sweep to power during Benazir Bhutto's premiership of the mid-nineties; that controlled the infiltration of skilled saboteurs and assassins into Indian-held Kashmir; and that maintained a direct connexion with Osama bin Laden. Zia's successors could congratulate themselves that their new province in the north-west almost made up for the defection of Bangladesh in 1971.

Now it was time to unravel the gains of the victory: the Taliban protectorate had to be dismantled and bin Laden captured, 'dead or alive'. But having played such a frontline role in installing fundamentalism in Afghanistan, would the Pakistan Army and the ISI accept the reverse command from their foreign masters, and put themselves in the forefront of the brutal attempt to root it out? Musharraf was clearly nervous

but the US Defence Intelligence Agency had not erred. In the final analysis, Pakistan's generals have always remained loyal to the institution that produced them—and to its international backers—rather than to abstract ideas like democracy, Islam or even Pakistan.

The country's fifty-five year history has been a series of lengthy duels between general and politician, with civil servants acting as seconds for both sides. Statistics reveal the winner: while elected representatives have run the country for fifteen years, and unaccountable bureaucrats and their tame front men for eleven, the Army has been in power for twenty-nine—leading some to suggest that the green-and-white national flag might be re-coloured khaki.¹ It is a dismal record, but the Pakistan high command has never tolerated interference from civilian politicians for too long. The last elected leader to believe he had the Army firmly under his control, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had to be disabused of the notion. In 1977, on the orders of General Zia—an erstwhile favourite whom Bhutto had promoted over the heads of five, more deserving, superior officers—the prime minister was removed from power and hanged two years later.²

After Zia's sudden death in 1988, power alternated between Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (1988–90; 1993–96) and Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League (1990–93; 1997–99). By 1998 it looked as if Nawaz Sharif—probably the country's most venal politician—was forgetting the lessons of Bhutto's fall. The rickety economy was facing collapse as the Southeast Asian financial crisis swept the region, exacerbated by US sanctions imposed after the 1998 Indo-Pak nuclear tests (Clinton later intervened to soften these on the grounds of US national-security interests). The Chief of Army Staff, General Karamat, called for a National Security Council to be set up to take charge of the situation, with the Army playing a major role. Nawaz Sharif sacked him in October 1998 and installed Musharraf as COAS instead.

¹ Khaki: Urdu (Persian) *khaki* dusty, f. *khak* dust. A. Dust-coloured; dull brownish-yellow. B. A fabric of this colour employed for field uniforms. In India, used for uniforms of the Guide Corps under Lumsden and Blodson in 1848, by troops in the Mutiny of 1857, and in the Afghan campaign of 1878–80: OED.

² Zia-ul-Haq, who masqueraded as an Islamist, had been trained in Fort Bragg and was a favourite of the US DIA. He had seen active imperial service in Jordan during the Black September of 1973, leading mercenaries to crush a Palestinian uprising on behalf of Tel Aviv and the Jordanian King. He was assassinated, together with the US Ambassador Arnold Raphel, when their military plane exploded in the sky in August 1988. The 'terrorists' were never discovered.

Six months later, under Musharraf's command, the Pakistan Army launched its Kargil offensive, capturing strategic heights in Indian-held Kashmir. Nawaz Sharif came under immediate US pressure and, in July 1999, ordered the troops to withdraw—snatching diplomatic defeat from the jaws of military victory, in the eyes of the high command. Nawaz Sharif, clearly counting on Washington's support, tried to instigate moves against Musharraf within the Army, while complaining in public that he had not been consulted about the Kargil move. The following October, while Musharraf was on a visit to Sri Lanka, Pakistan TV announced that the COAS had been sacked. Flying home, his plane was denied permission to land. Either while circling Pakistan airspace with dwindling fuel supplies, or after his final touch-down, Musharraf gave the order for Nawaz Sharif to be put under arrest. Announcing that he had been 'compelled to act, to prevent the further destabilization of the military', Musharraf suspended parliament and the constitution, appointed himself the country's 'Chief Executive' and established a governing National Security Council. (The Clinton administration ensured a smoother fate for Nawaz Sharif than Bhutto had endured, whisking him out of prison to enjoy a comfortable exile in Saudi Arabia.)

Liberal applause

Initially, there was some rejoicing both at home and abroad at the Pakistan Army's fourth coup in as many decades. To the popular delight at getting rid of Nawaz Sharif was added the innovation of a military take-over in the face of apparent White House displeasure. This, coupled with the pseudo-modernist rhetoric of the new ruler, encouraged a wave of amnesia. It was as if the institution that had dominated the country's political life for so many decades had ceased to exist—or undergone a miraculous transformation. Liberal pundits in New York and Lahore lost their bearings, while in the *London Review of Books* Anatol Lieven described Musharraf's administration as being 'the most progressive Pakistan has had in a generation'.³ The bulk of the citizens were more sceptical—indifferent to the fate of their politicians, and with few illusions as to the character or role of the Army.

Like his uniformed predecessors, Musharraf immediately promised to end corruption, reform the countryside, tax the middle-classes, eradicate poverty, educate the poor and restore real democracy. The Pakistani

³ 'In Pakistan', LRB vol. 23, no. 22, 15 November 2001.

road to absolutism is always paved with such intentions. Why were so many liberal commentators deceived? Partially it was sheer desperation. In the face of the appalling performance of elected politicians during the nineties, they were ready to grasp at straws. They were also taken in by Musharraf's rhetoric, replete with admiring references to Kemal Atatürk, and by his relatively untypical socio-cultural background. Unlike most of the military high command, Musharraf was not of Punjabi stock. He had no links with the traditional landed elite that has dominated the country, nor was he on the payroll of a heroin millionaire or close to some tainted industrialist. His family, educated and secular, had left Uttar Pradesh during the Partition of 1947 to find shelter in the Land of the Pure. After her son's rise to fame, his mother had casually revealed in the course of a newspaper interview that, in the fifties, she had been greatly influenced by progressive intellectuals such as Sajjad Zaheer and Sibte Hassan.⁴ She never said that her views had been genetically transmitted to her boy, but desperate people will put their hopes in anything.

Within a few months of Musharraf's seizure of power, however, there was already a strong indication that nothing substantial would change. The Chief Executive had appointed a friend and colleague, General Amjad, as head of the National Accountability Bureau, charged with rooting out and punishing corrupt officials, politicians and businessmen. Amjad was

⁴ The information had little impact in a country whose own history is barely taught in school or university. Zaheer and Hassan were two of the finest literary critics of the subcontinent. Both had joined the Communist Party of India during the thirties and were members of its Central Committee in 1947. After Partition, as senior Communists of Muslim origin, they were despatched to Pakistan to help organize the CP which had been denuded of its cadres, the bulk of whom were Hindus and Sikhs. The pair's intellectual skills did not transfer automatically to the organizational plane. Under pressure to achieve results after the surreal putschist turn by the Cominform in 1948, the two went underground. Zaheer became a Professor of Urdu literature and hid in our house. My mother's uncle, then Inspector-General of the country's police force, met him there by accident and was charmed. Later both participated in a half-baked attempt to take power, in league with nationalist elements in the Army. An unreliable brigadier lost his nerve and informed his superiors. A general and several junior officers were court-martialled, the CP banned. Zaheer, Hassan and the poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz ended up in prison. The Inspector-General of police was not amused to see that his name was fifth on a list of notables to be executed without trial, and even less pleased to discover that the friendly professor he had met at dinner had compiled the list. Jawaharlal Nehru—a family friend of Zaheer—intervened and the latter was released and returned to India. It was quite bold of Musharraf's mother to claim friendship with two convicted traitors.

one of the few senior officers in the Army rumoured to have unpolluted hands. His reputation for 'playing by the rules' had made him a maverick, even as a junior officer. One story has it that he refused to allow a general to borrow the mess silver for a private dinner party, despite insistent requests. His colleagues, taken aback at his stuffiness, laughed at him in public while privately according him some grudging respect.

Musharraf's decision to put him in charge of the NAB had potentially serious consequences. Within a fortnight, Amjad had hired the services of a reputable non-establishment American lawyer, William Pepper, to track down the money spirited abroad by Benazir Bhutto and husband Asif Zardari. Simultaneously, Amjad ordered the arrest of industrialists who had borrowed money from the banks and failed to pay even the interest on it. A list of politicians who had done the same was published in every newspaper. The naming and shaming was punishing psychologically but was insufficient to deal with the cancer. Amjad reportedly told the Chief Executive that, to tackle the problem seriously, it would be necessary to create at least one completely clean institution in the country; only then would civil servants and politicians take notice. But any thorough purge of the Augean stables would have required the arrest of dozens of serving and former generals, admirals and air marshals, long rewarded for services to their country by the chance to engage in large-scale corruption. Musharraf naturally balked at any such prospect, fearing it would divide and demoralize the top brass and could lead to a break-down in discipline. Once discipline went, the Pakistani military risked becoming little different from a Middle-Eastern or Latin American army where any Johnny, regardless of rank, thought he could seize power. Amjad was quietly shifted sideways, first as a Corps Commander and then as head of the Fauji Foundation, a military honey-pot where his own scruples will certainly be tested. The imprisoned capitalists were released, the shamed politicians heaved a collective sigh of relief and it was, in every sense of the phrase, back to business as usual.

A listing economy

If the removal of Amjad had pleased local capitalism, the appointment of New York banker Shaukat Aziz as Finance Minister endeared Musharraf to the IMF. Pakistan's economy has long been crippled by exorbitant defence expenditure which, amplified by inadequate tax revenues, has



led to sky-rocketing debt-service costs. By 2001, debt and defence amounted to two-thirds of public spending—257bn rupees (\$4.2bn) and 149.6bn rupees (\$2.5bn) respectively, compared to total tax revenues of 414.2bn rupees (\$6.9bn). In a country with one of the worst public education systems in Asia—70 per cent of women, and 41 per cent of men, are officially classified as illiterate—and with health care virtually non-existent for over half the population, a mere 105.1bn rupees (\$1.75bn) was left for overall development.

Throughout the nineties, the IMF had scolded civilian governments for failing to keep their restructuring promises. Musharraf's regime, by contrast, won admiring praise from 1999 onwards for sticking to IMF guidelines 'despite the hardships imposed on the public by austerity measures'.⁵ Impoverishment and desperation in the burgeoning city slums and the countryside—still home to 67.5 per cent of the population—were exacerbated further. Some 56 million Pakistanis, nearly 40 per cent of the population, now live below the poverty line; the number has increased by 15 million since Musharraf seized power. Of Pakistan's four provinces the Punjab, with around 60 per cent of the population, has continued to dominate economically and politically, with Punjabis filling the upper echelons of the Army and bureaucracy and channelling what development there is to local projects. Sind, with 23 per cent of the population, and Baluchistan (5 per cent) remain starved of funds, water and power supplies, while the North West Frontier's fortunes have been increasingly tied to the heroin economy.

The problem is structural. The economy rests on a narrow production base, heavily dependent on the fallible cotton crop and the low-value-added textile industry; irrigation supplies are deficient, and soil erosion and salinity widespread. More damaging still are the crippling social relations in the countryside. Low productivity in agriculture can only be reversed through the implementation of serious land reforms, but the alliance between khaki state and local landlords makes this virtually impossible. As a recent Economist Intelligence Unit report on Pakistan noted:

Change is hindered not least because the status quo suits the wealthy landowners who dominate the sector, as well as federal and provincial parliaments. Large landowners own 40 per cent of the arable land and control

⁵ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Pakistan, Afghanistan*, London 2002, p. 18.

most of the irrigation system. Yet assessments by independent agencies, including the World Bank, show them to be less productive than smallholders. They are also poor taxpayers, heavy borrowers and bad debtors.⁶

The weak economy has been further skewed for decades now by Pakistan's vast military apparatus. For 'security reasons', its costs are never itemized in official statements: a single line records the overall sum. In Pakistan, the power of any elected body to probe into military affairs has always been strictly curtailed. The citizenry remains unaware of how the annual \$2.5bn is distributed between the Army (550,000-strong, with two-thousand-plus tanks and two armoured divisions); the Air Force (ten fighter squadrons of forty combat planes each, as well as French and US-made missile systems); and the Navy (ten submarines, eight frigates); let alone what is spent on nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

Military Keynesianism

This lack of transparency is extended to the maze of loss-making business enterprises run by the Army. The oldest of these is the Fauji Foundation, established as a charity for retired military personnel in 1889. It has since become a giant conglomerate in its own right with controlling shares in sugar mills, energy, fertilizer, cereals, cement and other industries—combined assets worth 9.8bn rupees. The Army Welfare Trust, set up in 1977 under General Zia's dictatorship, controls real estate, rice mills, stud farms, pharmaceutical industries, travel agencies, fish farms, six different housing schemes, insurance companies, an aviation outfit and the highly accommodating Askari Commercial Bank, many of whose senior functionaries had earlier served at the discredited Bank of Credit and Commerce International; the AWT's assets have been valued at 17bn rupees. The Air Force and Navy chiefs also have their own troughs: the Shaheen and Bahria Foundations.

Many of these enterprises have been engaged in corruption, although scandals usually erupt only when civilian businessmen have become too greedy in exploiting the opportunities they offer, or where the fall of a government has exposed its shady deals. Benazir Bhutto's spouse Asif Zardari was implicated, via an intermediary, in short-changing the Air Force's Shaheen Foundation in a dubious media venture. In another

⁶ EIU, *Pakistan, Afghanistan*, p. 26.

case, it emerged that a private businessman had bribed senior naval personnel in the process of defrauding the Bahria Foundation over a land-development deal. A lawyer petitioned the Supreme Court to outlaw all use of Army, Navy and Air Force insignia in private enterprise. He demonstrated how the foundations were contravening the Companies Ordinance of 1984, accused them and their partners of collusion and corruption, and pleaded with the Court to outlaw all commercial activities by the armed services. Unable to contest his arguments, the judges dismissed the case on a technicality—thereby revealing their own subordination to the colour khaki.

Contrary to the widely propagated myth that the Army can at least run things efficiently ('probably the only successful modern institution Pakistan possesses', according to an admirer in the *London Review of Books*), a detailed investigation by Ayesha Siddiq-Agha has recently revealed that most of these businesses are run at a loss, with the generals siphoning off funds from the bloated defence budget to make up the difference.⁷ The military are also entirely innocent of modern accounting systems: their books tend to ignore such factors as personnel and utilities costs, and in any case government auditors are warned not to examine them too closely. Meanwhile, their stranglehold over many areas of the economy stifles normal development. In the construction and transport sectors especially, the ability of Army-run companies such as the National Logistics Cell and the Frontier Works Organization to monopolize government contracts, whether under civilian or military regimes, forces smaller companies out of business.

Musharraf's war on terror

By 2001, as a result of skewed spending, stagnating agricultural and industrial sectors and grotesque military mismanagement, the country was groaning under a burden of a \$27bn external public debt. Then came September 11. Mercifully for Washington, the Army was already in power in Pakistan. The Pentagon and the CIA were spared the time and energy needed to organize a new military coup. At such a moment

⁷ Anatol Lieven, 'In Pakistan'; Ayesha Siddiq-Agha, *Pakistan's Arms Procurement and Military Build-up, 1979-99: In Search of a Policy*, London 2001. See also her paper, 'Power, Perks, Prestige and Privileges: Military's Economic Activities in Pakistan', presented at an international conference on 'Soldiers in Business: Military as an Economic Actor' held, appropriately enough, in Jakarta, October 2000.

of tension, institutional continuity must have been reassuring.⁸ As the B52s roared into the newly won bases in Kyrgyzstan, and secret sites along the Baluchistan border were reactivated for Special Service use, the IMF approved a three-year poverty-reduction loan of \$1.3bn and helped reschedule over \$12bn in debt—resulting in massive budgetary relief for Pakistan, and allowing its State Bank to build unprecedented foreign-exchange reserves (some \$7bn by July 2002). By this time, the IMF had also disbursed soft loans totalling around \$400m.

Overnight, Musharraf had become *halal* in the West and was being fêted by Bush and Blair in the same venues in which Reagan and Thatcher had welcomed Zia and Osama's friends. For its part, the Army high command was united in the view that the born-again alliance with Washington was a severe blow against the Indian enemy. Pakistan's civilian elite, too, was in jubilant mood. Now at least they were no longer pariahs. A new imperial war, with their very own Army as the principal proxy and the whole country as a base of operations, meant they were needed once again. The more liberal wing of the elite dreamt of a permanent Pentagon–Musharraf axis that would destroy the hold of Pakistan's dreaded Islamists forever. Overlooking how many times their illusions had been betrayed in the past, its representatives now travelled to Washington to plead that the region never be left unprotected again. For their part, emissaries from the disgraced politicians Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto became familiar if pathetic figures at Foggy Bottom, pleading endlessly with junior functionaries of the State Department not to trust the Army.

The exact role of the ISI during this period remains unclear. In his 19 September broadcast, Musharraf had hinted that his loyalty to Washington's war on terror would be rewarded not just with cash but with an American wink at Pakistan's nuclear and Kashmiri aspirations—'our critical concerns', as he put it.⁹ As early as November 2001, India was protesting at increased Pakistani-backed infiltration into Kashmir. On 13 December, armed gunmen allegedly linked to the ISI-funded Jaish-e-Mohammad attacked the Indian parliament building in Delhi, killing nine people. With tension rapidly escalating, the two countries

⁸ 'Before September 11 Musharraf's largest problem was that he was a dictator. Now it is his biggest asset', rejoiced Christopher de Bellaigue. 'The Perils of Pakistan', *New York Review of Books*, 15 November 2001.

⁹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

mobilized close to a million troops along their common border—a mass militarization that served retrograde political interests on both sides.

Khaki democracy

By this stage, Musharraf's own popularity had begun to list asymmetrically: the more he was appreciated by the State Department the less inclined he felt to undertake any serious measures at home—leave alone implementing the 'true democracy' he had promised. Instead, like Generals Ayub and Zia before him, the Chief Executive now attempted to make himself impregnable. Temporarily discarding his uniform, he dressed up in native gear, complete with a particularly stupid turban, and launched his political career at a 'public' rally, consisting of peasant-serfs bussed into a large field by a friendly landlord in Sind. The referendum is a time-honoured weapon of dictators in search of legitimacy; Musharraf's decision to rig the April 2002 plebiscite in his favour disillusioned even his most ardent liberal supporters. The majority of the electorate stayed at home while government employees, soldiers and serfs trooped to the polls and transformed the CE into the country's elected President.

The next step was equally predictable. The one thing every dictator needs in order to provide his regime with a civilian façade is a political party. Not a problem, Musharraf's sycophants assured him: a handy instrument could easily be fashioned from the debris of the past. Like an out-of-work courtesan, the Muslim League—the country's foundational party—was given a shower, dusted with powder and provided with a new wig, before being displayed to the growing queue of potential suitors. Ayub's pet name for his party was the Convention Muslim League; Zia preferred the Pakistan Muslim League, and allowed the Sharif family to manage it on his behalf. Musharraf, having ditched the Sharifs, needed a new name. A timeserver suggested the Quaid-i-Azam Muslim League and so it came about that this old-new entity entered the lists as the General's Party, in the General's Election of October 2002.¹⁰ Its personnel were hardly unfamiliar, consisting of bandwagon careerists of every stripe. In the countryside, these were still the old landed gentry, eager to please the new ruler; in the towns, local notables who had accrued vast sums of

¹⁰ Quaid-i-Azam (the Supreme Leader) was the appellation inflicted on Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan, by his devoted fans. The title stuck and is today almost better known than the name. Jinnah is usually referred to in Pakistani publications as the Quaid.

money, often through illegal means, and become procurers of power and influence. Where in the past a father or uncle had supported Ayub or Zia, now the son or son-in-law was eager to act as a prop for Musharraf. In the face of mass apathy the bureaucracy, past masters in the art of electoral manipulation, set about ensuring the required outcome.

The results of the October election were much closer than anticipated. Despite the low turnout—under 20 per cent, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan—and skilful ballot-rigging, the official Muslim League (Q) failed to secure an overall majority in the National Assembly, winning 115 seats out of 324, mainly in its traditional bastion of the Punjab. Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party secured eighty seats—again, largely in their Sindhi heartland—and the rump of the Muslim League that had remained loyal to Nawaz Sharif took nineteen. It was the Islamists who scored a really big hit. With 66 seats, their united front Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA—Unified Action Conference) gained the highest ever complement that Islamist parliamentarians had ever achieved in the history of this Islamic Republic, sweeping the Pashto-speaking regions along the Afghan border. Their colourful turbans and long beards literally changed the complexion of the National Assembly. True, they were helped by the first-past-the-post system inherited from the mother of parliaments; but Thatcher and Blair had both benefited from this without too many complaints. The MMA also emerged as the largest political force at provincial level in the North West Frontier, and a dominant influence in Baluchistan: the provincial Governments in Peshawar and Quetta are currently presided over by Islamist Chief Ministers.

Power brokers acting on Musharraf's behalf finally managed to confect a federal coalition that would exclude the MMA. A block of PPP members was detached from the parent organization with the inducement of senior cabinet posts. A Baluch landlord and hockey enthusiast, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, who had been responsible for the brutal repression of peasants in 1977—ten were killed in clashes with the police—was anointed as Musharraf's new Prime Minister. Two decades before, Jamali had slaved to achieve the same position under General Zia, but the latter was not keen on hockey and preferred to employ the cricket-loving Nawaz Sharif as his factotum. Given that 70 per cent of Musharraf's new Cabinet, including Jamali, had featured prominently on General Amjad's list of corrupt politicians, the widespread public cynicism was hardly a

surprise. Far from regenerating democracy, the *khaki* election has bared the sordid reality of Pakistani politics; a large majority feels both disenfranchised and alienated from those who govern on its behalf.

The election campaign itself had been largely lacklustre, if not totally apolitical. The mainstream parties had no differences on ideological or policy grounds, either on the domestic or the international level. The People's Party had long abandoned its populism. Benazir Bhutto, wanted in Pakistan on charges of corruption, attempted to rule from her base in Dubai via her chosen proxy, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, a *Pir*-cum-landlord from Sind. Politician and religious divine rolled into one, Fahim is hardly a social liberal. Uniquely, even for Pakistan, all his four brothers-in-law are the Koran.¹¹ Like the different Muslim Leagues on offer, the PPP was concerned with power solely as a means to offer patronage and enlarge its clientele.

Maulana Diesel

The Islamist alliance, for its part, had no disagreements with the other parties on the IMF prescriptions for the economy—there is, after all, a neoliberal reading of the Koran—but campaigned vigorously in defence of Islamic laws and against the US presence in the region. There was hardly a day without a newspaper headline highlighting MMA leader Maulana Fazl ur Rehman's hostility to the American troops: 'Fazl Demands Expulsion of US Commandos from Tribal Areas', 'West Bent on Initiating Civilizations Clash: Fazl', 'Fazl Says Sovereignty Mortgaged to US', 'Fazl Demands Halt to US Army Operations', 'Fazl Urges US Troops Withdrawal', 'MMA Vows to Block Hunt for al-Qaeda', etc.¹² Much of this was pure bluster, but it proved helpful electorally. The Maulana

¹¹ Fahim's family claims descent from the first Muslims to enter the Subcontinent, the cohort of Muhammad bin Kasim who took Sind in 711. Women in early Islam owned and inherited property equally with men, a tradition that took root in parts of Sind. Landowners there devised an ingenious solution to prevent women from marrying outside the family, which could lead to the parcellization of the estates. The young heiresses were literally married off to the Koran—similar to nuns becoming brides of Christ. This preserved the girls' virginity, which in turn provided them with magic healing powers; but above all ensured that the property remained under the control of their fathers and brothers. The problem posed by the four wealthy sisters of the PPP leader was thus piously solved.

¹² *News*, 12 May 2002 and 3 June 2002; *Dawn*, 12 May 2002; *News*, 25 May 2002; *Daily Times*, 16 October 2002; *News*, 27 November 2002.

himself admitted that it was not religion that won him new support, but his foreign-policy stance. In discussions with Musharraf, he declared his willingness to establish a coalition with himself as prime minister. When the General pointed out that his anti-Americanism posed a serious problem, the cleric is reported to have replied: 'Don't worry about that now. We've worked with the Americans in the past. Make me Prime Minister and I'll sort everything out.' The offer was declined.

The MMA is a six-party alliance, with the Jamaat-Ulema-Islam—Party of Islamic Scholars—and the Jamaat-i-Islami, or Islamist Party, its two main pillars. Both JUI and JI have been active for decades, mainly in the frontier regions of the NWFP and Baluchistan. Traditionally, the JUI considered itself anti-imperialist and was involved in coalition governments with radical secular parties during the seventies, under the leadership of Maulana Mufti Mahmood, Fazl's father. It had always been hostile to the JI—regarding it as an instrument of the US and Saudi Embassies in Islamabad—and had opposed the military dictatorships of both Ayub and Zia; Mufti Mahmood had attended Peace Conferences in both Moscow and Beijing. His own death came just a few years before the collapse of the Communist world, and his son inherited the party. As a student Fazl had dabbled in poetry, writing verses in both Pashto and Urdu, and publicly declaring that the leftist Faiz Ahmed Faiz was his favourite poet. After his father's death he continued the old man's policies, working closely with Benazir Bhutto's government in the mid-nineties. But whereas the farthest old Mufti had gone was to collect his dollar *per diems* at international conferences, the son, as befitted the new times, was more market-oriented. In return for his active support for Ms Bhutto he succeeded in procuring a lucrative diesel franchise, which covered large parts of the country—and, after the Pak-Taliban victory, most of Afghanistan as well; it earned him the sobriquet of Maulana Diesel.

The bearded, rotund Diesel soon became a great favourite of Benazir's Interior Minister General Naseerullah Babar, architect of the Taliban triumph in Kabul. Fazl's political, ideological and commercial links with the Taliban leadership always remained strong, enabling him to outflank his local JI rivals, whose pawn Gulbuddin Hekmatyar—much fêted by Reagan and Thatcher in the eighties—had been effectively sidelined by the new student clerics in Kabul. After the US assault on Afghanistan, the bulk of the Taliban melted into the hills along the Pakistani border. There many of the returnees swelled the ranks of the JUI and other

Islamist parties, and the JUI took the lead in organizing mass rallies against the 'foreign occupiers'. It was Fazl who realized that, given the first-past-the-post system, the Islamists could be wiped out electorally if they remained divided. The Alliance was his initiative and he was duly elected its Secretary-General even though, at 49, he is fifteen years younger than his main coalition rival, Qazi Hussain Ahmed.

Zia's orphans

Qazi Hussain's election as Amir of the Jamaat-i-Islami marked a generational shift in an organization that had remained under the control of its founder Maulana Maudoodi and his deputy, Mian Tufail, since its origin in 1941.¹³ Where the JUI was populist, had support in the villages and collaborated with the Left, the JI was built on the Leninist-cadre model. Its recruits were literate and carefully vetted, most of them students from urban petty-bourgeois backgrounds. Many had been tested in the campus struggles of the sixties and seventies. During the semi-insurrection of 1968–69 that had toppled the Ayub dictatorship, the Left had dominated the action committees that led the fight. To support the JI in those days required a real commitment to the cause. Its motto: religion is our politics and politics our religion.

Qazi Hussain, a leader of the JI student faction at Islamia College in Peshawar, spent his formative years in battles—some of them physical—against the Left. He joined the parent body in 1970, when the JI's branch in East Pakistan collaborated fully with the Army in its attempt to destroy the Bengali nation. Their cadres in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet compiled lists of 'undesirables' for military intelligence, which were then used to eliminate the opposition. 'Chairman Mao supports us, not you', was a taunt they regularly hurled at the Bengali Left of the time. China and the US both supported the Pakistan Army's brutal assault on its own people, aimed at nullifying the dramatic 1970 election victory by the Bengali-nationalist Awami League. The Army's onslaught backfired badly. Bangladesh is the direct outcome of a military refusal to recognize the will of the electorate. In the circumstances, the Army's self-image as the only institution that holds the country together is somewhat grotesque.

¹³ For a more detailed account of the Jamaat-i-Islami see my *Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*, London and New York 2002, pp. 174–81.

The JI's role in the 1971 break up of Pakistan had the effect of drawing it closer to the intelligence apparatuses of the rump state. When Zia seized power six years later and joined the US jihad in Afghanistan, the JI became the main ideological prop of the military regime. Qazi Hussain defended the new turn; his skills were noted and he began his rise through the JI apparatus. A former geography lecturer, he now abandoned the low-paid chores of the academy to open a Popular Medical Store in Peshawar's Soekarno Square. The shop was not just an informal meeting place for local JI cadres but a successful commercial operation, soon to be joined by a Popular Medical Laboratory and a Popular X-Ray Clinic.⁴ It now became clear that he also aspired to a more popular Jamaat-i-Islami. Hussein knew that it was not easy for a vanguard party that had always prided itself on its elite character to re-brand and market itself in a more accessible style; in politics, as in business, there is always an element of risk when you decide to expand. His decision to join the 2002 Islamist alliance must have been as carefully calculated as the trim of his pure-white regulation beard (in marked contrast to the wilder salt-and-pepper variety sported by Maulana Diesel).

A rhetorical shift?

Incapable of serious opposition to either Musharraf or his Washington backers, the MMA concentrates its fire against women. It has declared its intention to ban cable-TV channels and co-education, and to institute the *shari'a* in the provinces under its control. Given the disaster that befell a more extreme version of this programme in Afghanistan, this could be mere rhetoric designed to keep their followers inebriated while embarrassing the occupant of President's House. The MMA's triumph may or may not have been aided by some independent campaigning from sections of the ISI but it has undoubtedly put pressure on

⁴ These medical facilities undoubtedly made a handsome profit, but they also served a useful political function. The poor were sometimes provided with free medicines and treatment, which they naturally identified with the JI. In Cairo last year, an Islamist parliamentarian boasted of how his organization controlled the leadership of the doctors' union. We were conversing in his clinic, where a majority of those waiting to see him were the Cairene poor. Like some sections of the Latin American church, these Islamists try to provide a substitute for the dismantled welfare functions of the state. The effects are limited, but their psychological impact in the poor quarters should not be underestimated.

the regime to release more of the Islamist militants imprisoned when Musharraf joined the 'war on terror'; some of the diehard Sunni terrorists responsible for appalling atrocities against minority Shia and Christian communities had already been freed before the election.

More striking was the MMA's success, in November 2002, in dragooning virtually the entire National Assembly—there were two exceptions—to observe a minute's silence in memory of the 'martyred Aimal Kansî', whose body had been returned to Pakistan after his execution in a US Federal penitentiary for the murder of two CIA officials in Langley, Virginia in 1993.³⁵ Earlier, some 70,000 people had attended Kansî's funeral prayers in Quetta, also organized by the MMA. Why did the National Assembly agree to mourn him? Pakistan has not outlawed capital punishment, so it could hardly be seen as a liberal protest. The simple answer is that the MMA's success has worried its opponents and they are hoping to defeat the Islamists on their own ground. Bhutto *père* made a similar error in the seventies and paid the price.

Rural intifada

A striking example of the political parties' unwillingness to defend even the most elementary needs of the population can be seen in their reaction to the two-year struggle that has been waged by tenants working on state farms leased to the Army. Rarely has an event spotlighted the bankruptcy of traditional politics in Pakistan so vividly. The British colonial administration had first leased what were then known as 'Crown lands' in 1908, setting up military farms to produce subsidized grain and dairy products for the British Indian Army. After Partition, management of the farms—scattered around Lahore, Okara, Sahiwal, Khanewal, Sargodha and Multan, mainly in the Southern Punjab—passed to the Ministry of Defence and the provincial government. The Army controlled 26,274 acres, the remaining 32,000 acres were leased to the Punjab Seed

³⁵ Kansî and his father had been recruited in Baluchistan to work for the CIA during the First Afghan War (1979–89). Once US aims in the region had been accomplished it dumped most of its unofficial agents, while continuing to work with and through the ISI. Kansî's family—perhaps expecting a pension—felt betrayed. Kansî flew to the US to avenge the insult, targeting two senior CIA officials; he shot them dead and flew back to Pakistan. Whatever else, Kansî was clearly a well-trained agent; the CIA deserves the credit. A big reward was offered for his capture and he was ultimately betrayed by his brother-in-law, apprehended by the ISI and handed over to the US authorities. Over to Hollywood?

Corporation. The tenant families who work the farms are the direct descendants of those first taken there in 1908. Forty per cent of them are Christians: mosques and churches function side by side. The religious parties have failed miserably in these regions and the peasants have, since the seventies, tended to vote for the People's Party. No longer.

The *de facto* merger of Army and state on virtually every level has meant that the generals act here as a collective landlord, the largest in the country, determining the living conditions of just under a million tenants. The functionaries of the khaki state regularly bullied and cheated their tenants: they were denied permission to build brick homes; the women were molested; and management approval had to be obtained—and paid for—to get electrification for the villages or build schools and roads. Bribery was institutionalized, and the tenants suffered growing debt burdens. The unconcealed purpose of this ruthless exploitation was to drive the tenants off the land so it could be divided into private landholdings for serving and retired generals and brigadiers. The rationale of the prospective new owners was that, when the time came, they would re-employ the evicted tenants as farm-serfs: it would be better for everyone. The aim of such 'modernization'—in Okara and Sargodha as in Rio Grande do Sul—was, of course, deregulation, privatization and the destruction of tenant solidarity.

The authorities, khaki and civilian, had been attempting to loosen the grip of the tenants over the land by offering short-term contracts and replacing *battai*—share-cropping arrangements that allowed tenants to keep half of what they produce—by cash-rents. Till now, the colonial administration's Punjab Tenancy Act of 1887 has safeguarded their rights: male tenants and their direct descendants who had cultivated the land for more than two generations had the right of permanent occupancy. It was illegal to eject them from the land. Despite the misery inflicted on their families, the tenants defied all attempts to divide them along religious lines and remained united in a single body: the Anjuman-i-Muzaireen Punjab, or Punjab Tenants Organization, set up in 1996.

In June 2000, without any consultations, the khaki landlords announced the conversion from a system of shared-produce to cash-rents. The tenants were outraged. Every evening there were informal assemblies to discuss the resistance, involving the entire village—women and children were to play a leading role in this rural *intifada*. Angered by the daily

harassment, the tenants refused merely to defend the status quo and retaliated by demanding complete ownership of the land that their families had worked for decades. Their slogan, *Malkiyat ya Maut*—‘Ownership or Death’—echoed that of similar struggles in other continents. The first public protest took place on 7 October 2000: a four-hour sit-in on the lawn in front of the Deputy Commissioner’s office in Okara—the second most-powerful post-colonial bureaucrat in the city—by a thousand tenants protesting against the new scheme. Two days later, the Deputy Director of the military farms rang the local police chief and informed him that the tenants were threatening violence and had, in some villages, prevented the managers from removing (i.e. pilfering) wood. The Frontier Constabulary and Elite Force Rangers—their main function to prevent smuggling over the Indian border—arrived in the village and began roughing up the tenants. As women and children saw their fathers, brothers and husbands abused and kicked, they poured out of their homes to hurl stones at the police. A number of tenant activists were arrested.

As news of the confrontation spread to neighbouring villages, the protests began to grow. Attempts by the authorities to divide or buy off tenants were a failure. In the spring of 2002 the Rangers opened fire on protesting tenants: some were killed. Organizers were arrested and beaten up in full view of their families. Women—Christian and Muslim—marched to Okara, carrying the wooden bats they use to beat the clothes as they wash them in the river, and surrounded the police station. Nothing like this had been seen before. The Army realized that, short of a massacre, this could be a protracted struggle. Ironically, the large presence of Christians excluded a blood-bath; it might annoy their co-religionist in the White House. On 9 June 2002, a thousand armed police and rangers surrounded the village of Pirowal. The siege lasted for seven hours, but the police failed to capture the organizers, despite threats to burn the entire cotton crop of the village. They had underestimated the power of peasant solidarity.

In a sharply worded editorial the Karachi daily, *Dawn*, commented on 24 June 2002:

To win back the confidence of the restive and distraught farmers, the police force sent to harass and terrorize them should be withdrawn immediately and any ill-conceived notion of teaching them a ‘lesson’ must be abandoned. Cases should be registered against government and farm management

officials who ordered the police action that led to deaths . . . Once these confidence-building measures have been taken, the government should sit down and negotiate with the tenants, perhaps through the Punjab Tenants Organization, on how to grant the ownership rights due to them.

The generals ignored the advice of a newspaper that has usually been sympathetic to their needs. Instead, Musharraf's new status as the trusted ally of the West was used against the PTO, and its non-violent leaders charged under the new 'anti-terrorist' legislation—just as the real terrorists, most of whom have, at one time or another, been on the payroll of the military intelligence services, were being released. Despite the fact that Pakistan has been a regular port of call for Western media pundits over the last year—the *New York Times's* Thomas Friedman preening himself on his intimate knowledge of frontier conditions—none of the visiting journalists deemed this struggle worthy of attention. It distracted from the only story they wanted to tell: fundamentalism. In fact, of course, mullahs are most effectively marginalized when people see them as irrelevant to their real needs—as the PTO farmers have shown. During the campaign of the last two years, church and mosque have alternated as their meeting places. In a discussion with two of their leaders—Dr Christopher John, the PTO senior vice-president, and Younis Iqbal, general secretary—in Lahore in December 2002, both stressed that religious divisions had played no part whatsoever in their conflict with the state. At their meetings, Iqbal said, 'You couldn't tell the Muslims and the Christians apart'.

Heroin economy

The only serious breach in the wall dividing an English-educated civilian and military elite—with access to Western universities, medical schools and military academies—from the rest of the population, illiterate or semi-literate (largely, but not exclusively, the product of the *madrasahs*), has been the one made by the 'black economy'. Over the last two decades, the cultivation of poppy orchards in Afghanistan and the NWFP has produced a fine crop of heroin millionaires. Many are of peasant or urban petty-bourgeois stock, but their money has funded every political party and thoroughly penetrated the armed forces: cash, kalashnikovs and Pajeros—Japanese Range Rovers—have been distributed in all directions. In return, the humble heroin merchants have been loaded with honours and public displays of affection. As good fathers, they made

sure their children were properly educated and became part of the elite. The upward mobility of this layer has slightly altered the composition of the property-owning fraction, without changing much else. Money remains the great leveller in the upper reaches of society, while the price of urban land has reached astronomical heights: the price of an apartment in the Defence Colony of Karachi or the fashionable Parade Ground in Lahore does not compare badly with New York or Berlin.

During the nineties, heroin had been despatched to Europe and North America via two routes. The first led along the Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar down to Karachi and thence in container ships to Mediterranean ports. The second, policed by the Russian mafia, went from Afghanistan via Central Asia and Russia to the Balkans, and then to the capitals of the West. The defeat of the Taliban after 9.11 has brought about the virtual collapse of the Pakistani heroin networks. The Northern Alliance now monopolizes the trade and it is their old Russian friends who prosper, while Kosovo has become the main distribution point for most of the world.¹⁶ The Pakistani economy has only withstood the blow because of the cash that has smoothed the path of the American troops.

Since the country's foundation in 1947, the Pakistan Army has been the spinal chord of the state apparatus. The weakness of political institutions as the state emerged from British rule, the absence of a bourgeoisie and domination by a rural elite—a parasitical excrescence of the worst sort—led to an over-reliance on the civilian bureaucracy and the Army. Since there was no real consent for landlord rule, force—both direct and indirect—had to be brought into play. Both institutions had been created by the colonial power, which formed them in its mold.¹⁷ Whereas the civil service was soon mired in corruption, the Army held out for a little longer. The impression was created that, while individual officers

¹⁶ It would not come as a total surprise to discover that Western soldiers and civil servants, policing the Balkan protectorates on behalf of the *basileus* in Washington, were also benefiting from the poppy trade.

¹⁷ The needs of the post-1858 civil servants of the Raj were supplied by the colonial state precisely in order to prevent the corruption that had characterized the rule of the East India Company and led to the vilification and prosecution of its most successful agents, Robert Clive and Warren Hastings. The hierarchical discipline of the British Indian Army was combined with its subordination to the senior civilian ruler—governor-general or viceroy. The only breach in this custom was the celebrated clash between Kitchener and Curzon, which the former won: the youngest viceroy was recalled to London.

might be susceptible to bribes—they were, after all, human—the institution itself was clean.

Two long periods of martial law destroyed that image. General Ayub Khan's family became extremely wealthy during his rule from 1958 to 1969, as did some of his collaborators. And between 1977 and 1989, at least two of General Zia's Corps Commanders were centrally involved in the heroin trade and gun-running. Corruption on a lesser scale spread through the junior ranks. The failure to crack down on these practices was hardly accidental. The generals adopted a materialist approach to the problem, seeing it as an easy way to preserve the unity of the Army. The loot could not be shared equally since that might promote egalitarian tendencies among the colonels and majors; but at the same time, the subalterns could not be denied some protection money for their crucial role in 'protecting' Pakistan.

Military threat?

Does Pakistan really need such a large defence establishment? The khaki ideologues insist that ever since Partition there has been a permanent military threat from India. The notion, as I have argued elsewhere, is ludicrous.¹⁸ On all three occasions on which the two countries have gone to war—twice over Kashmir, and Bangladesh—the initiative was taken by Pakistan. The Indian Army could have taken West Pakistan in 1971, but was not allowed to cross the international border by its political leaders. Today, with both countries in possession of nuclear delivery systems, it is obvious that neither the Kashmir issue nor any other dispute can be resolved through war. Even an India dominated by Hindu chauvinism and saffron demagogues is hardly likely to attempt a conquest of Pakistan. Who would it benefit? It might be different if Pakistan had limitless quantities of oil lying just beneath the surface. In fact, there is no rationale behind the fear of India. It serves only one purpose: the maintenance of the huge military-industrial complex that sprawls across the country and sustains khaki hegemony.

In truth, the threat to the Army's predominance has always come from its own people. The only time the old Pakistan was genuinely united was

¹⁸ See *Pakistan: Military Rule or People's Power?*, London and New York 1971; *Can Pakistan Survive?*, London 1983.

during the 1969 uprising from below that saw students and workers in Dhaka and Karachi, Chittagong and Lahore, topple the dictatorship of Field Marshal Ayub Khan. The Army never forgave its Bengali citizens this act of treachery, and embarked on a bloodbath when they proceeded to elect the leaders of their choice. It is worth stressing the point, glossed over in so many recent accounts, that the Army which demands such vast sums to preserve the state actually provoked its break-up in 1971.

The Army is now the only ruling institution; its domination of the country is complete. How long can this be sustained? Till now it has managed to preserve the command structure inherited from the British: Pakistani generals often boast of its inviolability when compared to the Middle East or Latin America. But a great deal has changed since the sixties. The officer corps is no longer the exclusive domain of the landed gentry—a majority of officers come from urban backgrounds and are subject to the same influences and pressures as their civilian peers. Privileges have kept them loyal, but the processes that destroy politicians are already at work. Whereas in the recent past it was Nawaz Sharif and his brother, or Benazir Bhutto and her husband, who demanded kick-backs before making deals, it is now General Musharraf's office that sanctions key projects.

Of course, high—even stratospheric—levels of corruption are no bar to longevity, if a military regime has sufficiently intimidated its population and enjoys solid enough support in Washington, as the Suharto regime in Indonesia testifies. Can Musharraf look forward to this sort of reign? The fate of his dictatorship is likely to depend on the interaction of three main forces. First will be the degree of internal cohesion of the Army itself. Historically, it has never split—vertically or horizontally—and its discipline in following a 180-degree turn in policy towards Afghanistan, whatever the sweeteners that have accompanied it, has so far been impressive. It is not impossible that one day some patriotic officer might deliver the country of its latest tyrant, as Zia was once mysteriously sent on his way to Gehenna; but for the minute, such an ending appears improbable. Having weathered the humiliation of its abandonment of the Taliban, the high command looks capable of brazening out any further acts of obeisance to orders from the Pentagon.

What of parliamentary opposition to military rule? Vexing though the upshot of October's election, for all its fraud, proved to be for Musharraf,

the parties that dominate the political landscape in Pakistan offer little hope of rebellion against him. The cringing opportunism of the Bhutto and Sharif clans knows few limits. The Islamist front ensconced in Peshawar and Quetta is noisier, but not more principled—cash and perquisites quickly stilling most of its protests. Popular discontent remains massive, but lacks any effective channels of national expression. It would be good to think that their performances in office had discredited the PPP and Sharif's clique forever, but experience suggests that should the regime at any point start to crack, there is little to prevent these phoenixes of sleaze from arising once more, in the absence of any more progressive alternatives.

Finally, there is the American overlord itself. The Musharraf regime cannot aspire to play the same role as regional satrap that Zia once enjoyed. Pakistan has been ousted as imperial instrument in Afghanistan, and checked from compensating with renewed incursions in Kashmir. But if Islamabad has been forced into a more passive posture along its northern borders, its strategic importance for the US has, if anything, increased. For Washington has now made a huge political investment in the creation of a puppet regime in Kabul, to be guarded by US troops 'for years to come', in the words of General Tommy Franks—not to speak of its continuing hunt for Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants. Pakistan is a vital flank in the pursuit of both objectives, and its top brass can look forward to the kind of lavish emoluments, public and private, that the Thai military received for their decades of collusion with the American war in Indochina. Still, Washington is pragmatic and knows that Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were just as serviceable agents of its designs in Kabul as Zia himself. Should he falter domestically, Musharraf will be ditched without sentiment by the suzerain. The *Pax Americana* can wage war with any number of proxies. It will take an uprising on the scale of 1969 to shake Pakistan free of them.

XAVIER DE C***



LETTER FROM AMERICA

My dear Debray,

THE DEED IS DONE! I am a US citizen.¹ You'll be pleased to hear that I passed the language and history tests with flying colours and without impugning the reputations of our ambassador's predecessors here in Washington. The vow of allegiance was sworn in the somewhat sombre surroundings of the Immigration Office; we stood before the Star-Spangled Banner, hand on heart. Knowing me as you do, however, you will understand that this was no act of petty opportunism on my part, but prelude to a vaster scheme.

Naturally, I don't expect to convince you; but who could not attempt to persuade his oldest friend of a project which, he fears, may prove the only safeguard—however temporary—of the civilization that has formed them both? In 212 AD the Emperor Caracalla, mindful of the barbarian hordes at his borders and the growing costs of military expenditure, took the revolutionary step of declaring every freeman of the Roman Empire—from the banks of the Tigris to the Atlantic Ocean—a citizen of Rome. In a trice, the faltering superpower was reinforced by millions of new taxpayers, talents and recruits. The edifice endured for another two hundred years.

Today, does not Western civilization—in the hands of a mere 15 per cent of the world's population and, thanks to globalization, as visible to the other 85 per cent as the contents of a Hermès shop-window in the Place Saint-Denis—demand a similarly unified power? Shared goals unite Europe and the US. We all seek to deregulate our economies, democratize our hinterlands, promote human rights. But our wealth attracts resentment and around us there surges a rising tide of the hungry and the dispossessed. Huntington's homilies on the clash of civilizations ignore the crucial fact that the world is also divided into states. The

point, for any man of action, is to ensure that ideologies and institutions coincide. Would there be an Islam today, if an Umayyad and then an Abbasid *impeium* had not arisen within decades of Mohammed's death? If Damascus and Baghdad had not been political, as well as religious, capitals? Would we have a Christianity had there not been a Christendom, Carolingian or Byzantine, to hold back Arab incursions? A Mount Athos, without the ramparts of Constantinople? Cistercians, without a Frankish chivalry, Jesuits, without a Charles V?

Today, our civilization demands its own encompassing political institution: the United States of the West. The European response to September 11—'*Nous sommes tous américains!*'—and surge of unanimity, from *L'Humanité* to the *Figaro*, was heartwarming in its way. But shared sentiments without unity of command are good for nothing but after-dinner speeches. Our opinion-makers are satisfied with so little—their indifference to the connexion between words and facts never ceases to astonish me. Less poetry, please, and more logic! Kennedy's *Ich bin ein Berliner* was a strategy, not a spasm of emotion. A new century lies before us. What role will Europe settle for in America's march across Asia—staffing a first-aid post on the Afghan frontier? Patrolling the Gulf in a paddle-boat? Providing after-sales service for the Middle East? My friend, the only way to escape from protectorate status is to move up from Zone Two into Zone One. Is it just, is it democratic, that the inhabitants of the fifty states alone should vote for the American president, whose thumbs-down determines the fate not just of a couple of gladiators but of millions of lives?

The task, admittedly, would be easier if our new Augustus, relaxing on Air Force One, would scribble his reflections in French or German, as Marcus Aurelius in Greek. But the resemblance between the pioneers of the Tiber and the apprentices of the Potomac is striking: on both sides, one finds the same pragmatic refusal of abstraction, historical optimism, inaptitude for melancholy, chicanery everywhere, from the Operations Room to the marriage bed. Both offer a welcome for strangers and a respect for all gods. In both, the conquered—Latinos, Japanese—are granted citizens' rights.

The first step is to instruct our international-law specialists to draw up a conversion plan, transforming a region of common values into

¹ Extracted and adapted from *L'Édit de Caracalla ou plaidoyer pour des États-Unis d'Occident*, Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard 2002. Translated by John Howe.

one of shared sovereignty. The position of Puerto Rico—*estado libre asociado*—may point the way for our new constitutional model. Territorial discontinuity will be no problem: think of Hawaii, let alone Martinique or Guadeloupe. The Atlantic will be to the USW as the Mediterranean to Rome—*mare nostrum*. Paris and Los Angeles are equidistant from the Hudson. What use the irrational multiplication of foreign ministries, intelligence services, surveillance satellites, in pursuit of an identical set of interests? Why so many heads, for a single geo-strategic continuum?

By this stage, my dear Régis, you will have grasped the scale of what lies ahead. Here, perhaps, my long years of service to the French State may be of use in drafting an advisory brief for the advocates of both sides. How, first of all, should Europe's spokesmen—one of those rotating chairmen, Belgian, Italian or Dutch, who replace each other every six months at the pinnacle of the EU—put the case for the USW, if granted an audience in the Oval Office? I would suggest six basic points.

1. Your superpower is no empty boast, Mr President, but your tasks are disproportionate to your capacities. You are already overextended. You cannot cover the planet, from the Kuriles to Panama, the Cape of Good Hope to the Taiwan Strait, the Balkans to Tierra del Fuego, all by yourself. See how many danger zones already escape your grasp—North Korea still unsubdued, the President of Afghanistan unable to leave his capital. Rubber dinghies blast holes in your warships in the Gulf. Latin America descends into chaos. US businessmen can scarcely travel abroad without threat of kidnapping or worse.

Through their ballooning birthrates, the armies of the least dependable nations, the underdeveloped ones, will become ever more dangerous; those of the whites, though better equipped, will run short of recruits and already lack enthusiasm for the sacrifice. Your population's attachment to the things of this world—so important in sustaining our mutual quality of life—is not a problem as long as superior firepower allows you to dominate from 30,000 feet. But one day nuclear proliferation will qualify that advantage. A people's willingness to die for their country remains their rulers' strongest card. NATO's Article Five commanded universal support in the immediate aftermath of September 11 but enthusiasm, you will have noticed, has since been on the wane. Our electorates, too, can read a map and do their sums. Confucius plus Allah equals

70 per cent of oil reserves and nearly two-thirds of the global population. China is with you now; but if in future it was to see its interests in a Sino-Pakistan-Saudi axis, Europe might feel its centre of gravity start to shift. The balance between our two continents is changing. One day, your troops will have to step down into the mud. United in one great transatlantic federation, however, our masses will be freshly inspired to fight alongside—or even in advance of—their new compatriots.

2. Consider the demographics. In 1900, the West had a third of the world's population and, through its colonial system and the illiteracy of its subject peoples, dominated half the globe. In 2025, Westerners will be a mere 10 per cent, and our literacy rates are on the decline. Mastery of advanced technologies will slip from our hands as China and India forge ahead in software developments. Grouping ourselves into a single Federation might not end our demographic stagnation, but it would at least temper one flow of immigrants with another. The Latino culture of your Hispanic newcomers is under-represented in northern-dominated Europe—to our detriment. Christianity's centre of gravity has moved south. In 1939 the three biggest Christian countries were Germany, Italy and France; today they are Mexico, the Philippines and Brazil. You are closer and more engaged with them than we are, and can help refresh our religious roots. On the other hand, with our millions of North Africans and Turks, we know your enemies better than you do. Your ideas are too simple for the complexities of an Islamic world with which you lack common frontiers and shared memories, good or bad. Hence your clumsy counter-offensives, ill-matched alliances, crude analysis.

You will bring your millions of Latinos into the United States of the West, and we our Muslims. Think how much more credible our leaders will be as planetary spokesmen, once our common state is a genuinely representative microcosm of the human mosaic, an unequalled setting for inter-cultural exchange. More important still, Mr President, the incorporation of Europe will mean a WASP replenishment of your population on a massive scale. The demographic effect of two or three hundred million ethnic Europeans, fair-skinned descendants of your Pilgrim Fathers, is a factor you will not want to ignore.

3. The economic argument is equally compelling. Consider the advantages of encompassing nearly 60 per cent of world GDP within one sovereign state. There will be no more anxieties about foreign investors' willingness to sustain your current-account deficit. They will have no choice. In uniting our economies, we will not merely put an end to bickerings over steel, bananas and hormone-rich beef. Each will offer the other a crucial strategic correction. What could better restore the shaken faith of your investors in their post-Enron corporate culture than the solidity and long-standing relationships of our Rhenish model? And what better way to invigorate our stagnating industries than the shock therapy of Texas or Manhattan? Working together, Big Government and Big Business will forge the optimized superhighway of the future. We will discreetly remind you of the virtues of social dialogue, factory committees and employment policies; you will point out the value of mergers and staff reductions. The great West of the future, our common ideal, will be productivity plus redistribution. Can you achieve it alone, Mr President?

4. Culture, I know, is not your first concern; I will be brief. Within the USW, your entertainment industry will no longer be the target of our envious professionals (though they may mourn the transformation of that Moloch of pixels and celluloid which it gives them so much pleasure to abhor). Our contributions in this field will give you a quality label to silence any such carping. Globalization will no longer be disparaged as Americanization. Hamburger plus chateaubriand, soap opera plus Visconti, Coca-Cola plus Château Pétrus, Disneyland plus the Louvre—the complement of quantity plus quality will enable the USW to conquer on two fronts: the right to happiness plus spiritual elevation. Mass audiences and cultural refinement, big budgets and experimental art—who then will dare to talk about dumbing down, wall-to-wall vulgarity, brain candy? Our common culture will no longer be synonymous with materialism and exhibitionism—the products of your Military–Industrial–Entertainment Complex—but with culture *tout court*, from top to bottom of the range. Alone, you are omnipresent. Together, we will be irreproachable. (I would add that in our intellectual and artistic circles, especially in France and Italy, you will find an enthusiasm for the star-spangled banner that your campuses might envy.)

5. The state of your federal institutions, Mr President, leaves much to be desired. You have ten times more hold over your allies than over your lobbies. Our expertise in administrative law—I am thinking of the French, in particular—will help recalibrate musclebound interest groups to the advantage of the executive. Paradoxical as it may seem, the promotion of elites from the periphery will serve the purposes of the centre. The same applies to your unwieldy military machine. In a hundred years' time, your redoubtable regional commanders—praetorians deaf to the protests of their colonists and auxiliaries alike—might, following precedent, set themselves up as proconsuls to fight over the remnants of the West. It will be hard for your swaggering C-in-Cs to accept the equal ranking of American forces with the new European supplement, let alone to concede strategic command to officers they have been accustomed to treat as little better than the heads of NGOs. But your allies themselves will be far less resentful once fully integrated into the united armed forces of the USW. New recruits will be galvanized, leaders motivated, general staffs heartened by direct contact with the men at the top—all more royalist than the king. Instead of 'playing an active part alongside the United States', they will at last be at the centre.

The present 'sharing of the burden' leaves too much of it on you. A time will come—for Rome, it was the third century AD—when defence expenditure will exceed the limits acceptable to your domestic opinion. Your hundreds of millions of new taxpayers will at last allow you to stop 'externalizing' the costs—already a hefty percentage of your Federal budget—of that immense military apparatus. What's more, granting citizenship to your oldest allies will swamp the siren voices of isolationist withdrawal with enthusiastic supporters of humanitarian war.

6. You fear the opinion polls: 'America for the Americans!' Yet your analysts already describe Israel as the fifty-first state, Taiwan the fifty-second and Turkey, 67-million strong, as the fifty-third, without Midwest complaint. A marketing campaign will soon persuade the nervous: Infinite Justice, New Frontier, America on the March, Unending Adventure, Happiness Unbounded! We will co-finance it. Reassure your patriots and militias that the demographic doubling, the influx of fresh money, the extension of Americanness, like that of Romanness in its day, will double the glory of your country and its

protective power. Remind them of the gain in strategic depth—your enemies pushed outside a reassuring cordon of buffer states.

There is a reciprocal concession: the right to run for the highest office. You may be alarmed that your great-grandchildren will elect a president born in Mexico, Denmark or France. But the Emperor Trajan, who extended the imperial frontiers of Rome to the Persian Gulf, was Spanish; Septimus Severus, who spoke Punic and Syriac, a Tunisian; and Diocletian a mere Dalmatian, or Croat. Rome was not always in Rome. More than once under those great itinerants, the Antonines, staff and records followed the Number One. Marcus Aurelius ran the empire from the Rhine or the Danube. Constantine moved his capital to the Bosphorus, an offcentre waste land—a brilliant displacement, which did away with the idea of encircling. The shift was to give the first multicultural society a thousand years of supplementary life. Some day, perhaps, the United States of the West will have its capital in Ankara, Honolulu or Messina . . . But let's not get ahead of the music. For the next century, we Europeans can formally guarantee that Washington will remain on the Potomac.

It is for the reasons all too briefly summarized here that we ask you, in all humility, to grant us the rights of the City. I'll leave a memo for your advisers to sift through. My successor will be here in six months for the answer. My respects, Mr President.

And now for the Old World. How best to present the case to a president of the European Commission? East-bank hierarchs, don't forget, are thinner-skinned. The eminent zero will require gentle handling.

1. Dear friend, don't be uneasy. All that is required is your signature. This course was started on years ago—as far back as 1925 at least, when Valéry could write, unblinkingly, that 'Europe visibly aspires to be governed by an American commission'. The US is already a European power by treaty: it sits as a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe—in fact, it controls it. One attempt after another to form a military counterweight has faded into the mist. Who today speaks of the WEU and its 'security charters', the WEAO, the FAWEU, Eurofor and the 'Gymnichs'? Who remembers the Planning Cell, the Franco-German Defence Council,

the European Security Council or even your most recent boast, the 'European Rapid Reaction Force'? At a regional level, NATO is your sole functioning defence structure. If you had had any belief in yourselves, you would have declared the North Atlantic Treaty obsolete after the Berlin Wall came down. But the two currents—Christian and Social Democratic—that have most consistently put their shoulders to the wheel of a federal Europe have been, to say the least, unwavering in support of our liberators' foreign policy. At least, in becoming a fully fledged component of the United States of the West, you may obtain some formal reciprocation.

2. Europe's heart is willing: that is the main thing. Caracalla's edict itself endorsed unconscious small-scale custom. Citizenship was already granted from time to time to army veterans, to Greek or Oriental notables and thinkers, sometimes to whole towns. The situation today is already far more advanced. 'Happy Birthday to You' has supplanted *Bon anniversaire, nos vœux les plus sincères*, as Harry Potter has replaced *Le Petit Prince* and Mickey Mouse upstaged Spirou. While transatlantic citizenship remains a right to be acquired, Americanness is an established fact. The first will crown the second, a roof placed on the walls of a house that has risen almost imperceptibly, day by day. A change of sovereignty may be decided by treaty; but it will only be real and enduring if there is also an instinctive transfer of allegiance—visual, musical, dietary. For Europeans, especially if they are Russian, Polish or Czech, the biotope is already American.

'If we had to do it again, I would start with culture', Jean Monnet said. Too late. A vote in the European Parliament will always be able to adopt another regulatory procedure, and a referendum with a 30 per cent turnout 'decide' on the birth of a European Federation of Nation States. But even as that mammoth—repainted in washed-out virginal blue, with no surviving trace of blood red—languishes in intensive care, it is being intravenously fed on American sounds and images. Your stock exchanges are tuned to Wall Street, your bankers to Alan Greenspan, your scientific reviews to *Nature*, your prime-time TV to our comedy shows, your current affairs to our opinion makers, your criticism to the *New York Review*. Your managers, your tools, the buzzwords you fetishize—'international community' in place of our colder but more accurate 'international system';

or 'governance' for our 'administration'—are all imported from here, for obvious reasons. Your future CEOs and finance ministers are trained in our business schools, as are the Colombians and Thais. Your presidential hopefuls scramble to be filmed with the Commander-in-Chief on the White House lawn or, better still, at the ranch. Your intellectuals will surely welcome their newly acquired states in the West with more panache than they have displayed to their Eastern acquisitions.

What other country—in the last fifteen hundred years, at least—has been able to offer a common capital to all the world's youth, whether gilded or deprived? It is futile to protest: happiness was French in the eighteenth century; today it is American. Thomas Jefferson, as his country's minister in Paris, was in the habit of saying that a civilized man would place his own country first and France second. The motto has been inverted by your young technocrats. All that the French, Germans and Italians know about their neighbours now is transmitted via those of their works that enjoy transatlantic approval. Barely speaking each other's languages, they communicate in the lingua franca of the unifying third party. The Franco-German intellectual discussions that took place in 1930 no longer exist. Since the US fixes the standards and norms of law, beauty, finance, intelligence and justice, all cultural exchanges pass through here. Gastronomy **excepted**, all certificates of authenticity and proper functioning—whether of your telephones, your movies or your governments—are American stamped.

3. For all the efforts of your legal and administrative experts, the European State will never leave the drawing board. A good citizen would have to memorize a schema—annually updated—more complex than an oil refinery's plan: the Commission, the Council, the Parliament, the Court, the seventeen decision-making procedures, scores of abbreviations and acronyms, the key to current compensation scales. The good American just needs to watch TV: flag, Wall Street, weather. USW citizenship will result in an enviable simplification of your people's daily lives.

Your depoliticized populations naturally lack faith in your electoral process. Under the EU's unique brand of enlightened despotism, the real power centres—the Central Bank, the Commission,

the Directorates—are utterly undemocratic, while democratic structures—the Assembly at Strasbourg—have no power. Your elected deputies, senators, presidents and prime ministers gesticulate grandly on an empty stage. War and peace, trade policy, budget, currency, major technological choices are out of their hands—hence that far-away look in their eyes. As they cast their ballots for the USW president, European electorates will feel proud to have some influence again.

4. At last, your voice will be heard. Your men of influence will expatiate in newspapers that matter. You will have access to the real decision-makers. Of what use a French or British Security Council veto that has not been used in thirty years? You grumble now about our foreign-policy motives, but you will see our slogan—‘Multilateral when we can, unilateral when we must’—in a new light, once all this is yours. On 19 November 1996, the Security Council voted fourteen to one—the US dissenting—to re-elect Boutros Boutros-Ghali as Secretary General. A fortnight later our candidate Kofi Annan was appointed. That’s the kind of multilateralism you will grow to enjoy. You complain that the American administration goes back on its word—Kyoto, land mines, ICC. Wait till you, too, can overturn a treaty retrospectively through federal law. Only through the USW will Europe have the means to say something to the world again and—more importantly—to make it listen.

You will keep your particularisms. The death penalty has been abolished in Wisconsin and Iowa, too. Besides, is there a single value proclaimed in European speeches that America has not more successfully put into practice? Peace? Both world wars came out of Europe. Democracy? Over here, the community elects even the sheriff and the judge. The New Deal? Equality through redistribution? We claim to be liberals but, when pushed, we can be far more Keynesian than your Euro-socialists. Your Central Bank is a law unto itself, while the Federal Reserve has to submit an annual report to Congress. Finance capital is more constrained in the US than the EU—witness our army of regulators.

5. Was it all for this, you ask? These fifty years of summit meetings, conferences, treaties, pacts—all in vain? Not at all: the EU experience

has been a vital decompression chamber, allowing your rear-guard elements to shed their old habits in order to cope with the great change ahead. French Socialists, for example, could never have pushed through the neoliberal revolution so swiftly if it had not been for the sake of Europe. Nor could the traditional Right so easily have let fall the banner of 'work, family, fatherland'. Monthly EU meetings are already conducted in English—a crucial transition stage. Norpoisian prudery at the Quai d'Orsay has been overcome. In weaning Europe from its past the EU has been a transitional object of attachment, a baby's dummy. Now the time has come to move on. Euroland, with its free trade and deregulated economies, will be your trampoline.

However fragrant with fraternity, a false good idea ages badly. Europe's new currency expresses the emptiness of the supermarket-state: notes from no-man's-land that show featureless bridges and windows opening on the void. No portraits, no landscapes, no maxims—have the Europeans no achievements, no history? Dollar bills, by contrast, proclaim America's eternal faith in God and in itself: a combat currency, splendidly messianic, with its roll-call of heroes, eagles, arrows, olive branch and the All-Seeing Eye.

6. There will be some regrets, of course. Britain will have to forgo its special relationship—and for that very reason will probably try to torpedo the project. France, having lost most in Europe, will have most to gain, not least getting free of German leadership. In compensation, once within the USW, both will gain that indispensable factor in foreign affairs: a stateside diaspora. Up till now, neither country has been able to compete with the Irish and Italians, let alone Cubans or Israelis. But with 60 million Franco-Americans, things will start to change.

As for your public opinion: recent experience has shown the unreliability of the referendum process, so no need to make too much fuss. Your governments anyway prefer to dispense with fanfares and military parades. Three extra initials on the passport, some flags to run up, bilingual messages to be played on internal flights—the necessary adjustments will hardly be noticed at all. Your signature here, please, at the bottom of the page.

And as for you and your anti-imperialist friends, my dear Debray, you may think the game is up. On the contrary—this will be just the beginning. From now on, your critiques will no longer be treated as crude anti-Americanism but as democratic civic protest. Cheer up! I see you now, marching on Washington, arm in arm with your fellow dissidents, Chomsky, Mailer, Sontag, Vidal.

See you later!

Your

Xavier

*C***'s letter, mailed from Washington only days before he left on a mission for his new government, arrived too late for Régis Debray to reply with his own, very different future for Europe, as he explains in an epitaph for the former French diplomat:*

*'Why should a patriot change his country? Flavius Josephus, Jewish military leader of the 1st century AD, walked out on a hopeless war of independence and went over to the Romans, announcing, "God has fled his sanctuary and set up with those against whom you are fighting". For a man like Xavier de C***, the thought that the genius of the West had fled across the Atlantic, to punish the impiety of the Old World, would be reason enough to follow it with arms and baggage. Flavius ended his days in the luxury of the Court, re-writing the history of the Jews. C*** paid a higher price. A Transoxanian specialist—he spoke fluent Turkmen, Karakalpak, Uzbek and Tajiki—man of action and strategic analyst, his talents had long been of service to the French state. They were now at the Americans' disposal.*

*'Shortly after posting his letter to me, C*** was dispatched by the Pentagon to Turkmenistan. He was killed one icy evening in November 2001, along with most of his men. They had advanced towards the Afghan frontier by Balkh, without encountering any resistance, when a cluster bomb, dropped wide of target by a B52, exploded over them.'*

BERNARD CASSEN

ON THE ATTACK

What are the origins of the movement that has developed so strongly in France against neoliberal globalization?

THEY CRYSTALLIZED with the formation of ATTAC, which was an initiative of *Le Monde diplomatique*. In December 1997 Ignacio Ramonet, who edits the monthly, published an editorial entitled 'Disarming the Markets', in which he discussed the tyranny of financial markets, and ended with an appeal for the creation of a popular association to which he gave the name ATTAC—Association pour la Taxe Tobin pour l'Aide aux Citoyens. I had discussed this with him, having shortly before given a long lecture to the Parti Québécois about Tobin's proposal for a tax on financial transactions. He wrote the article over a weekend and brought it in on Monday, and circulated it to all of us, as we always do at *Le Monde diplo*. When I saw the acronym ATTAC, I thought 'oh, that's great'. The rest of the editorial office was a bit cool, but I thought it a brain wave. When I asked Ignacio later why he had come up with ATTAC, he told me he had been thinking of one of Robert Aldrich's movies, called *Attack*. So he conceived the acronym before he knew what it would stand for—which is the best way round.

The appeal was launched like a bottle into the sea, without any idea of what the reaction might be. But no sooner had the article appeared than we were deluged with phone calls and letters. I have never seen any article produce such a response. Normally, a piece in the paper will generate half a dozen letters, and in rare cases—when the subject is particularly

sensitive, often to do with languages—a maximum of, say, forty. This time we were filling boxes with them, day after day. We were at a loss to know what to do. We had thrown out an idea, but it never occurred to us that it would be we ourselves who would create ATTAC. In the following issues we kept our readers informed and said we were making contacts, partly to gain time. But by March 1998 the pressure from them was so great we realized there was nothing to be done: we would have to take responsibility for setting up the association, since there was such wide demand. As I had some organizational experience behind me, I was assigned the job of taking this in hand.

My first move was to bring together the organizations—not the individuals—that had responded to our appeal. This was a basic strategic choice: to build ATTAC out of existing structures, whether trade unions, civic associations, social movements or newspapers. We also drew in organizations that had not initially responded, such as the Peasant Confederation, with which I was on good terms, and other unions. Within six weeks of our first working session in March, the organizations concerned had agreed on the statutes, a political programme, and a provisional leadership. ATTAC was officially founded on 3 June 1998. Its founding members were essentially ‘legal persons’—that is, collective entities—to whom a few individuals like René Dumont, Manu Chao or Gisèle Halimi were added for symbolic effect. I was astonished by the speed with which the different organizations decided to take part, including trade-union committees not usually quick off the mark, and by the financial commitment that accompanied it, allowing us to set up an office and equip a secretariat. The periodicals involved, besides *Le Monde diplomatique*, included the Catholic weekly *Témoignage chrétien*, *Transversales*, *Charlie hebdo*, *Politis*, and a little later *Alternatives économiques*, a somewhat social-democratic monthly of good quality. So it was a slightly curious mosaic. But it was not conceived and has never operated as an organizational cartel, which would have finished it.

Once the creation of ATTAC was formally announced in the *Diplo*, people started to join it—by October 1998, when we held our first national get-together in La Ciotat, near Marseilles, there were 3,500 members, and the number has grown steadily ever since. We accepted as members ‘legal persons’, like trade unions, associations, firms or groups, and started to work on the Tobin tax, treating it as a symbolic terrain on which to raise questions about the way in which financial markets function.

Since Tobin was an establishment economist, a Nobel Prize-winner in economics from the United States at that, his proposal possessed a certain automatic initial legitimacy, serving to highlight the scandalous character of the flows of global speculation today. So for the purposes of agitation, it makes an excellent weapon. But, of course, we never for a second thought that the Tobin tax was the one solution to the dictatorship of financial markets. It was just one point of entry to attack them.

Today the national organization of ATTAC has some 30,000 members, but in addition there are also more than 200 local committees all over France; constituted as legal bodies—ATTAC-Pays Basque, ATTAC-Touraine, ATTAC-Marseilles, and so on—in their own right, with democratic rules that we impose on them, in exchange for use of the acronym. They sprang up spontaneously, and a bit chaotically. So one might have 500 members, another 50. But a compact will shortly be signed by each committee with the national association, regulating relations between them. The national leadership—the executive committee of ATTAC—sets the political framework, issues statements, animates campaigns, etc. But if it decides to organize a day of demonstrations against the WTO, nothing will happen unless the local committees want it to. In that sense they are the backbone of the organization.

The result is a situation of dual power. The local committees are independent of us. Each has a president, a secretary, a treasurer. Likewise we are independent of them. A kind of dynamic tension exists between the two poles. The dream of some of the committees would be to constitute themselves into a federation, more or less like a party or a trade union. Although I was far from anticipating everything—indeed I didn't foresee the emergence of the committees themselves—I did sense that problems could arise here, and so I proposed national statutes that on first sight may seem undemocratic, but in my view are by no means so. There are 30 members of the national executive, of whom 18 are elected by the 70 founders of ATTAC, and 12 by the 30,000 membership at large. The reason for this structure is that the founders themselves were very diverse. They include the Peasant Confederation, civil-service trade unions, social movements like *Droits Devant!*, or the unemployed. There is no movement in the streets that is not a founder member of ATTAC. We reckoned that if all these forces agreed on a line of action and a leadership, they would give balance and stability to ATTAC, thus creating a framework that allowed smaller movements at regional level to develop

freely. In the localities, you may find the phenomenon of 'entryism'—organized political groups joining the local committees to try to take them over. So far, they have always failed. But with our national structure, power is not there to be taken; it is proof against raids. It was crucial to make it clear from the start that tactics of that kind wouldn't work. So, last November, we elected a new executive—18 people picked by the founders, forming a blocked list on which the individual members could only vote yes or no, and 12 chosen by the membership, voting for whoever they wanted.

Since its foundation in 1998 ATTAC has not only seen an impressive growth in France, it has also spread spontaneously outside the country. Today ATTAC groups exist in all EU member states, and in some of the countries that will join in 2004—Poland, Hungary. Its growth has been particularly strong in the Nordic countries, which was a major surprise for us, since this zone has such strong free-trade traditions. But ATTAC has swept through Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland. In Germany, ATTAC has some 10,000 members and in Italy it is at the heart of the 'no-globo' movement. In 1999 we convoked the first ATTAC-Europe meeting in Paris, which we have since built into a permanent network. Britain is an exception, since there the ground is already occupied by powerful NGOs like Oxfam, Friends of the Earth and War on Want on the one hand, and by a particularly active far-left group, the SWP—working through Globalize Resistance—on the other. For a British version of ATTAC to be formed, one would need the prior involvement of trade unions and intellectuals outside these sectors. Beyond Europe, ATTAC has already sprung up in Quebec, in Africa, in most Latin American countries and in Japan, and last year in Porto Alegre we organized a world meeting of the different ATTACs—nearly all of which have adopted the same model as the French original. We are meeting again in January 2003.

How do you define the aims of ATTAC?

Some months after we formed ATTAC in France, I proposed a formula which seems to have caught on—ATTAC Italy has even put it in its statutes. I call ATTAC an 'action-oriented movement of popular education'. The notion of popular education is an old one in France, that goes back to the 19th century. The Ligue de l'Enseignement was formed in 1866, and many other organizations were created thereafter. By the end of the

20th century they were suffering an identity crisis, but the idea remains a powerful one, which ATTAC has taken over and adapted to globalized conditions. What does it mean today? Essentially, that militants must be well-informed, intellectually equipped for action. We don't want people turning out on demonstrations without really knowing why. So ATTAC members aren't activists in the French sense of the term, which differs from the English, since its connotation is action for action's sake. Our work is in the first instance—though not the last—educational. If you look at the ATTAC website on any given day, what you'll see is a list of a dozen meetings, conferences and debates. To make sure this mission is properly carried out, we have a scientific committee with very demanding standards that produces or checks the accuracy of the books or leaflets that ATTAC puts out. This is one of the reasons for the high level of credibility that ATTAC enjoys in the media and with politicians.

In the political establishment?

In September 2001, shortly before the Ecofin meeting in Liège, Fabius—then Minister of Finance in the Jospin government—asked us to come and see him about the Tobin tax. When we arrived, there were six senior officials from the Treasury already present in the waiting room. With them, Fabius started to grill us about the tax, enquiring how it could be levied in practice, and suggesting it was technically impossible to do so. We explained that this was far from the case: that there are at least three different ways of enforcing it, and one of the best would be through the European Central Bank itself. Fabius said he had no authority over the ECB, which we of course knew. I replied, 'We are prepared to demonstrate against the ECB in Frankfurt to support you'. He could see that we were well prepared for any question he could throw at us. In general, of course, French politicians are thoroughly ignorant about the realities of globalization. Many ATTAC members know more about the WTO than our parliamentarians.

Do you have relays within the political parties?

Yes, in both the National Assembly and the Senate, as well as in the European Parliament, where we have a coordinating committee of ATTAC members, composed of a representative of each party of the Left—a Socialist, a Communist, a Green, a Radical, a Chevènementiste. We even have a right-wing deputy: Maurice Leroy from the department

of Loire-et-Cher. Some, though not all, of these people are viewed with suspicion by the leadership of their respective organizations.

You've given an idea of the scale and organization of ATTAC. How would you describe the social base of its membership?

That's a good question. We don't really have reliable data on the sociology of ATTAC in France, we have at best some opinion polls and samples. But *grosso modo* you can say that we are an association recruited from the lower-middle classes upwards, above all in the public services, with a significant proportion of students and teachers, but employees and executives of the private sector are also present. We also have a sprinkling of farmers and unemployed. What we do not possess—any more than anyone else—are roots in the working class, or popular sectors more broadly. This is an acute general problem in France, just as I imagine it is in Britain. There is a terrible crisis of working-class representation in the political arena, as you can see from the number of former voters of the Left who now cast their ballots for Le Pen—if they bother to vote at all. We have little or no impact as yet on these categories. We are trying to find ways to do so, via member organizations that work directly on problems of social vulnerability, so we can address those who are the first victims of neoliberal globalization more effectively. But it is still very difficult to explain to an unemployed youngster of 18 all the connexions between his immediate plight and the role of the IMF or WTO. We need to develop ways of getting our message across vividly and accessibly, without denaturing it. Our problem is that our resources—the human energies at our disposal—are still too small for the pressures on us, which are enormous.

What about the age structure of the base of ATTAC?

That's our second weakness. The generational profile of ATTAC is not good. We don't have accurate figures yet—a proper study will be made in 2003—but I would guess that young people, that is, under 35, don't amount to more than perhaps 25–30 per cent of the total membership. Of course, parties and trade unions have the same problem: they fail to attract youth. People say the younger generation will only go to rock concerts, but the truth is more complicated. In June 2000, during a big rally in Millau in support of José Bové and his comrades of the Peasant Confederation, an ATTAC conference on financial institutions—not

exactly the sexiest subject—drew 3,000 people, most of them very young. In principle ATTAC can attract these energies, which you could see in the big anti-Le Pen demonstrations last May. But this is a youth culture that is difficult to capture in any organized form. You see a generation that goes from one big demonstration to another—Genoa, Barcelona, Florence—without ever really engaging in day-to-day activities, in a kind of political zapping. Then in reaction against this channel-surfing sensibility, you get the super-politicization of small nuclei who often take the lead in the streets, as in Genoa or Florence. But a political generation is never formed overnight, so something more durable may arise out of this mixture.

Tracking back a little, what are the origins of Le Monde diplomatique itself, as the progenitor of ATTAC?

The paper was created in 1954, as a monthly supplement to *Le Monde*, covering international affairs. By 1973 it had some 40,000 readers. The big change came with the death of the then editor of the paper, François Honti. At that point Claude Julien, the former head of the foreign desk of *Le Monde*, who had taken a sabbatical from the paper, was given the editorship of *Le Monde diplomatique*. Julien promptly made something completely different out of the journal, with a radical line against imperialism, neoliberalism, privatization. I and Ignacio Ramonet joined the staff from that moment onwards. Julien edited the paper for 17 years, retiring in 1990, when Ignacio succeeded him.

Throughout these years, the *Diplo* had no independent legal existence—it was simply an annexe of the daily. But by the nineties we were no longer satisfied with this, and in 1995–6 we achieved the goal of a separate status. A new company was formed, in which 49 per cent of the shares were taken by the readers and staff of the journal—a lot of money was raised to help us—while 51 per cent were kept by the daily. Under French law, 33 per cent of the equity of a company constitutes a blocking minority, which can veto changes in its articles of association or capital structure. So our aim was to bolt the independence of the journal securely against any alteration without our consent. The *Diplo* is now a highly successful enterprise. It sells 225,000 a month on average. Like ATTAC, but on a much larger scale, it has grown from a national into an international phenomenon. There are now 23 different editions of the journal abroad: in Europe, Latin America, the Arab world, Korea. There

are also more than 20 internet editions, notably in Japanese, Chinese and Russian. In these different versions, the world-wide circulation of the *Diplo* is 1.5 million. We have a global readership.

The political discrepancy between the daily and the monthly has widened over the years?

That's true in many areas. Today our relationship with *Le Monde* is purely administrative. The daily is the majority shareholder of the monthly, and represented on its board. But it has no power of interference in what we publish, which is occasionally unpalatable to some at *Le Monde*—under French law, it is the editor who is responsible for the contents of a publication. At the same time, while some journalists at the daily may—and do—dislike the radicalism of the monthly, it completely respects our independence. It also benefits financially from the success of the *Diplo*, since we pay the daily a million francs a year for the right to use its name, in a franchise that runs for 25 years, plus the price of the technical services—printing, accounting, distribution—that we buy from it, and of course the dividends. So although some of the shareholders of *Le Monde* are certainly furious at the *Diplo*, and no doubt ask Jean-Marie Colombani—editor of the daily and head of the conglomerate it now controls—why he allows it to be published, it is actually in *Le Monde's* interest to permit this voice, which sometimes contradicts it, to flourish. Colombani likes to say: '*Le Monde diplomatique* is a journal of opinion; *Le Monde* is a journal of opinions'. Projecting an image of pluralism is not just a personal stand, but an institutional requirement, since *Le Monde* is building a media conglomerate that is increasingly diversified in its interests.

The World Social Forum is often thought to be a joint creation of ATTAC in France and the PT in Brazil. Is that so?

In February 2000 two Brazilian friends visited me in Paris. One, Oded Grajew, was a former entrepreneur. The other, Chico Whitaker, was the secretary to the Commission on Justice and Peace of the Council of Brazilian bishops. They said they had been to Davos, and they asked, 'Why don't *Le Monde diplomatique* and ATTAC organize a counter-Davos?' I replied: 'That's already been tried, at Davos itself. But access to the place is tightly controlled, the Swiss police are murder, and to organize a counter-Davos in France doesn't make much sense.' Then an idea

suddenly occurred to me, and I said: 'We need a symbolic rupture with everything Davos stands for. That has to come from the South. Brazil has the ideal conditions for doing so, as a Third World country with gigantic urban concentrations, a wretched rural population, but also powerful social movements and friendly political bases in many cities. Why don't we launch something in Porto Alegre, as a symbol of the alternatives to neoliberalism?' Two years before, I had written an article on the participatory budget of the PT administration and I knew the setting fairly well. Then I added—journalistic instinct speaking—'we should call it the World Social Forum, to challenge the World Economic Forum, and hold it on the same day of the same month of the year'.

That took all of three minutes. My friends said: 'You're right. Let's do it in Brazil.' So they contacted the then mayor of Porto Alegre, Tarso Genro, and the then governor of Rio Grande do Sul, Olivio Dutra, as well as social organizations in São Paulo, to get the project off the ground. In May I joined them all in Brazil. We still had to decide how best to launch the project publicly. ATTAC alone could not do it. But in June there was the UN Social Summit in Geneva, at which dozens of non-governmental organizations were due to be present, offering an ideal opportunity. So in the closing session of the conference, Miguel Rossetto, then vice-governor of Rio Grande do Sul, launched an appeal for the World Social Forum which provoked an enthusiastic response. (Incidentally, Tarso, Olivio and Miguel are now members of the Lula government.) Six months later, miraculously, the Forum came into being.

What was the geographical map of the first Forum?

The practical organization of the Forum was at first essentially a Brazilian operation, with the back-up of ATTAC-France. In purely geographical terms, its range was limited. But in media terms, its impact was enormous, because it coincided with the meeting of global elites in Davos. They, of course, assumed that they possessed complete legitimacy and tried to dismiss the meeting in Porto Alegre as a mere leftist rant. But when they had to accept the challenge of televised debates and were trounced, the tables were turned on them. Jospin had sent down two junior Ministers to see what was going on—since there were over 300 French participants—and on the first or second day admitted that there were two Forums, one Economic and the other Social, putting them on

the same level. So Porto Alegre was a huge success in terms of sheer international publicity.

On the other hand, I said at the time that it should be considered as number zero in the series, which ought properly to start with the sequel as the real first one, because representation from Asia, Africa and even the United States was so weak. I personally made no particular effort to ensure a strong American presence, or to hinder it. But when the American NGOs, who had been informed just like all others throughout the world, arrived only in small numbers, I was not worried. Globalization is an essentially American-led process, and it was important that anti-globalization not be American-led as well. So in my view it was strategically vital that the Forum started along a Franco-Brazilian, and then more broadly Euro-Latin American axis, which the Americans were welcome to join once the ground was well prepared. Otherwise there was a risk that American NGOs would immediately dominate the proceedings.

The attitude of many of them was summed up by Peter Marcuse from Columbia University, who remarked that since the Forum wasn't a US initiative, not a few American groups thought it couldn't be important, and didn't go. They were mistaken, of course, and next time they showed up in force. But by then the framework of the Forum had been secured. Although most anti-globalization activists come from the North, Western Europe or America, for our purposes it was crucial to kick off from the South. We could then incorporate American contingents in a movement that already had its own vocabulary, concepts and slogans, and could draw on support from Latin American forces, for a homogeneous outlook. Our problem now, of course, is to extend that to Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe.

What has been the role of the PT in all this?

At first, the PT was a bit uneasy about the Forum, because its tradition is quite 'vertical', and it was afraid that a Forum organized in Porto Alegre, which it did not control, might somehow be used against it. On one of my trips to Brazil, Lula asked to see me. We met in the Hotel Gloria in Rio. He had his aide Marco Aurelio Garcia (now his foreign policy adviser) with him, who did most of the talking with me. Instead of discussing the Forum and its relationship with the PT, I talked about

ATTAC and its relation to political parties in France. Each of us knew that we were talking about the same thing. I explained that ATTAC was an association, not a party, and kept its distance from organized political forces, though it was not against them. He got the message, and the next day I was informed by Marco Aurelio that he supported the Forum. But the PT as such has never played any role—none whatever—in the leadership of the Forum. On the contrary, the Brazilian committee contains people thoroughly hostile to any interference from political parties or groups, even if some, if not all of them are members of the PT themselves. A couple of times Olivio Dutra, as PT governor of Rio Grande do Sul, asked one of his aides to ring me in France to find out what the Brazilian committee was up to. So the PT has had no part in either the concept, or the content, of the World Social Forum.

Nevertheless, PT control of the administration in Rio Grande do Sul and Porto Alegre was presumably of material importance for the infrastructure of the Forums. Is this now threatened by the party's loss of power in Rio Grande do Sul?

It's too early to say. The support of the city, where the PT is still in power, remains. Rigotto, the new PMDB governor, has said he will continue to help the Forum, but it must become 'more open'. Obviously, there is no question of changing it, so in practice this means he will drastically reduce the level of assistance to it. Perhaps the new federal government will step into the breach, but all speakers in the Third Forum have been told that they must pay their own expenses. There will be difficulties, but the Forum itself is not at risk. Rigotto is well aware that shopkeepers, hotels, taxis in Porto Alegre—services in general—benefit hugely from the Forum. A move against it would be very unpopular locally.

How do you assess the impact 9.11 and the war on terrorism have had on the Social Forum?

Only four months elapsed between September 11 and the second Forum in January 2002, and for a few days after the attentat there was a certain disorientation among ATTAC militants in France. But then Bush did us a service by explaining that anti-globalization movements were anti-American movements. After that there were twice as many participants in the second Forum, where some three thousand organizations were represented. So in that sense, the war on terrorism just strengthened

our determination not to be intimidated. The more belligerent Bush becomes, the more violent the reaction he is liable to provoke. In France too, steps are being taken to criminalize social movements and NGOs—not terrorists—while in Italy anti-globalization militants are already being arrested. The attack on the WTC has given Bush and hawks everywhere a chance to restrict civil liberties, and cover up bad economic news. The movement understood that quite quickly, and has resisted this pressure pretty well.

To what extent do you think it possible to separate the original agenda of the World Social Forum from the global military offensive of the United States?

The theme of war has entered the prospect of the Forum, and it is important—but not all-important. War or peace, the problems of globalization remained essentially the same on September 10 and September 12: hunger, debt, inequality, AIDS. What we see now is a reconfiguration within the neoliberal order to the advantage of the United States. Europe and Japan, of course, are embarked on the same boat of globalization as the US. But aboard it, there are people who have tried to adopt measures that have nothing to do with neoliberalism, like the 35-hour week. The new conjuncture has allowed America to reassert control over its allies—I would even say that the principal target of the current American offensive is less Iraq than its ‘partners’. All this has its place in the Forum, but it will not monopolize it. If the first Forum was an occasion for analysis and critique, and the second for proposals, the third will be for strategy. The questions will be much more operational: what is to be done? The issue of war will be very important, but it will not be as dominant as it was in Italy, at the European Forum in Florence, where it overshadowed everything else.

Were you really surprised by that?

The prospect of war is a much more burning issue in Italy than in France, not least because there are US military bases there, which is not the case in our country. At Florence it was sometimes said that there was no anti-war mobilization in France because ATTAC prevented one, which is ridiculous. The fact is that Chirac has made protest difficult here by appearing to resist American pressures. That has made him very popular in the Arab world, and reduced the potential for French demonstrations against him, though this may not last very long. In Italy,

the situation is quite different. War is an absolutely central issue there, but against a background of major social struggles, wide detestation of Berlusconi, and a powerful trade-union movement led by the CGIL. The context is much more effervescent than in France, and the theme of war has become a virtual obsession. Knowing that the Forum would be held in Italy, and that Rifondazione would mobilize around the issue, we all agreed that war would be a leading theme in Florence, alongside its original slogan: 'We Need a Different Europe'. But then we discovered that all the posters for the march spoke only of war, without mentioning Europe. I can't say I was entirely surprised. But if the Forum had been held in France, it would not have gone like this. War would have been on the agenda, but not an obsession with war. Because whether war breaks out or not, B-52s and special forces will not alter poverty in Brazil or hunger in Argentina.

Isn't the contrast you've drawn a bit paradoxical? After all, the Italian state—even under Berlusconi—plays a very minor role in the current wave of Western military interventions, whereas the French state has participated full-bore in every one of them: in the Gulf, the Balkans, Afghanistan and maybe tomorrow Iraq. An Italian might say: this may not be ATTAC's issue, but the fact is that the French Left has a very weak record of resistance to wars of any kind, from Indochina and Algeria onwards.

True enough. In France, the conversion of the Communist Party to the nuclear *force de frappe* in the 1970s—when it was still the largest and most powerful party of the Left—was a watershed. Pacifist traditions of any kind are virtually non-existent in Paris, and there were never any mass struggles against nuclear weapons, as you had in Britain. Today, there is unanimity in the political establishment behind the French nuclear arsenal. On the other hand, if there is a war against Iraq, there will be mass protests—I am completely sure of that. Chirac has little to gain and a lot to lose if he takes part in an American expedition, because he has gained quite a bit by appearing to oppose one so far. But, judging by his past behaviour, he is quite capable of doing so.

How would you situate ATTAC historically? For a long time France was the country in Europe to which nearly all others—the Italians were perhaps an exception—looked for a political lead. This is a tradition that goes back to 1789, 1830, 1848, 1871, right on down to 1968. Thereafter it appeared to fade away. Should one see ATTAC as in its own way a revival of this

lineage—a French creation and initiative, in a period of deep reaction, that rapidly acquired a broad international resonance?

I've emphasized the way in which it was made possible by the impact of *Le Monde diplomatique*, which had already gained an international audience before ATTAC was created. But it is also rooted in another and much older tradition within French society, which is *la fonction publique*. In France public services—education, transport, utilities—are not only a technical mode of delivering goods to citizens, but a bond of social solidarity: what makes possible the 'republican pact' that creates national cohesion. Attachment to these services lies very deep in French culture, as one could see in the great strike movement of 1995, which was essentially a public-sector phenomenon. When the Paris metro shut down, it would take people here about three hours every day to get from Vincennes, where I live, to work in the city, and another three to get home again. But—this was the fantastic thing—it was as if the public-sector workers were striking for everyone else. It was a kind of proxy strike. Far from there being any complaints, the movement was hugely popular. That was why the government had to beat a retreat.

What one could see very clearly was that in popular consciousness, the public services are the first line of defence of the citizenry. They knew immediately that if these services were taken apart, they would be next for the chop. Of course, the battle over these services is worldwide. The drive to privatize them has two aims, which the European Commission scarcely takes the trouble to conceal. What are they? First, to put an end to a situation where banks and insurance companies see large sums of money circulating under their nose, in pension or security systems over which they have no control. The very thought of it makes them ill. Second, to whittle down the forces of resistance to neoliberalism. Public-sector employees have legal rights to strike and use them. If you can reduce their numbers, you weaken the possibility of any resistance to the neoliberal order.

ATTAC comes to a large extent out of this world, as its composition suggests—we are in our own way heirs of its traditions, and belong to its logic. But, of course, there was also the global conjuncture of the late nineties. Ignacio Ramonet wrote his editorial of December 1997 at the height of the Asian financial crisis, which was like a life-size illustration

of all the texts against globalization the paper had ever published. That too gave powerful credibility to the launching of ATTAC.

The great strikes of 1995 in France, followed by the Asian financial crisis in 1997, explain why ATTAC was born well before Seattle. But there is still one puzzle about its emergence. If one looks at the official varieties of French politics over the past twenty years, from Mitterrand onwards, their centre of gravity has moved steadily to the right. Ironically it was Chirac who popularized the notion of la pensée unique as a stifling consensus, before becoming one of its most prominent examples. Whether governments have been nominally of the Left or Right, the policies have remained the same. With every election, the voters rejected the government that pursued this programme, and the new government then carries on as before. How do you explain this strange paradox: a radical tradition that is far from spent, and finds expression in one of the strongest movements of protest in Europe, yet apparently has no impact on the immovable cupola of French politics?

That's a very complex question, to which I can do no more than give a few elements of an answer—it really demands a longer and more theoretical reflection. But in the first instance you have to remember the weight of the historic division between Right and Left in French life—it is virtually consubstantial with our political tradition. These are categories that live on after their content has declined or disappeared. So there is always a sector of opinion for which a bad government of the Left—any such government—is preferable to a good government of the Right. You can see this reflex at work in every municipal and legislative election in France. It is powerfully reinforced by the two-round voting system. There is no chance of changing this overnight.

Then there has been the enthusiastic neoliberal turn of Social-Democracy in France, as elsewhere, which has often made governments of the Left as zealous for deregulation and privatization as governments of the Right. Part of the reason for that difference is that the number one pressure for liberalization has come from the European Union, to which social-democrats were in many cases more favourable than conservatives. In France, as Alain Touraine candidly admitted, the word 'liberal' could for a long time not be spoken. So a substitute was found for it: 'Europe'. Things could be done in the name of Europe that would never have got through otherwise. In this sense, Europe was the Trojan horse of neoliberalism in France. You can see this very clearly in the case

of Mitterrand's presidency. In 1988, after he was re-elected President, the first European directive on the free movement of capital in the EU came into force. It had been approved by Balladur as Minister of Finance during the cohabitation of the previous government. Now the PS was back in office again, and Bérégovoy went to Mitterrand and asked him: '*Monsieur le Président*, what should I do? Ought I to fight for a directive harmonizing taxation of capital in the Community, as a safeguard?' To which Mitterrand simply replied: 'Bérégovoy, are you for Europe or against it?' Bérégovoy understood he had no choice. Mitterrand deliberately opted for a neoliberal Europe rather than no Europe at all. But he had, after all, a conception of Europe that dated from the immediate post-war period.

This kind of outlook influenced all the parties, including the Communists. *Le Monde diplomatique* and ATTAC have developed a consistent critique of it, with arguments that have crystallized into an active framework of education and action, in an international context where they have real resonance. It is perfectly true that we have had little impact on the French governments to date. But we always thought of a medium-term strategy, and never paid much attention to the electoral cycle in France. The elites don't care much about us, but movements and citizens do. Still, our target audience is ultimately international, rather than national. Our fundamental aim, as I have often said, is to decontaminate people's minds. Our heads have been stuffed with neoliberalism, its virus is in our brain cells, and we need to detoxify them. We have to be able to start thinking freely again, which means believing that something can be done. For the overwhelming conviction at present is that, politically speaking, nothing can be done. That is why our slogan, 'Another world is possible', amounts to something like a cultural revolution. It means that we are not condemned to neoliberalism, we can envisage other ways of living and organizing society than those we have at present. So our task is to persuade the largest number of people possible of the viability of such alternatives, and prepare the ground for a Gramscian hegemony that would allow different policies to be realized.

For the moment, our influence is considerable at the level of public opinion in general, and finds some echo in the political parties, even of the Right. But there is still very little advance there. This morning I had to give a talk to a conference of the PS, whose first session was devoted to the question: 'what forms of organization do we need?', while the second

asked 'what kind of ideas do we need?' As if you could decide matters in that order! I told them that for us the basic line of division is what attitude one takes to neoliberal globalization. So long as you are not clear about that, you might as well give up—there is no *juste milieu* that will allow you to evade the issue: saying yes to the Commission and no to the IMF is a farce that no longer fools anyone. The majority of the audience was openly hostile, of course. But a strong minority is beginning to listen, and to ask questions. Intellectually, we have by and large won the game, as you can see from the titles that sell in French bookshops.

What explains the strange default of the French political class as a whole in the arena of foreign policy, where in the last years it seems to have lost its strategic capacity completely? The current enlargement of the EU is a dramatic example. What can the French elites gain from a Europe of 25 members—with the United States openly demanding that Turkey, as the launching pad for a war on Iraq, be admitted in short order too? It is no mystery why the English elites are happy with this prospect, since they have always wanted to dilute the Community. But what has happened to their French counterparts, that they accept it so passively?

The debate on Europe has always been very different in France from every other continental country, where there was a consensus in favour of integration, uniting Christian and Social Democrats. That did not exist in France, where there was a sharp division between most Social-Democrats and the local equivalent of Christian Democrats, on the one hand, and Gaullists and Communists on the other. This is a structural cleavage which put paid to the European Defence Community in 1954, and has to a large extent persisted to this day. The partisans of Europe have never commanded a secure majority, and so they never wanted Europe to be really discussed. They feared that any concrete, detailed debate might give weapons to their adversaries, and so they always avoided it. Because they were always on the defensive, there was very little public discussion of Europe in France, till the late eighties. Then, in 1992, Mitterrand decided to stage a referendum on the Treaty of Maastricht. There was a tremendous political and media barrage in favour: practically every newspaper called for a yes vote, every television channel pummelled the same message home, most public figures declared their support. Yet in the end, 49 per cent of those who voted rejected the Treaty. So it squeaked through by a miracle. For good reasons and bad, popular opinion did not follow instructions from on high.

That is why none of the succeeding treaties—Nice and the like—have been submitted to a referendum. The chances of losing were too high.

So there was no debate about Europe in France because the pro-Europeans regarded themselves as a fortress under siege, and did not want to air issues that might expose divisions among them, or assist their opponents. Today there is zero discussion of enlargement—absolutely zero—because that is what makes life easy for transnational companies and financial markets. ATTAC defines enlargement as a structural-adjustment plan, along IMF lines, for Eastern Europe. The Washington Consensus comes by different names these days: in Western Europe we have the ECB and the Stability Pact, in the South it is structural adjustment, in Eastern Europe it is the incorporation of the *acquis communautaire*. Since the Nice summit of December 2000, ATTAC has had many workshops on Europe in progress. We have produced documents and demonstrated for another vision of Europe, and will certainly intervene on the terrain of the Constitution that Giscard's convention in Brussels is now confecting.

In the theoretical debates over global neoliberalism, what was Pierre Bourdieu's role—has the organization he created, Raisons d'Agir, played a significant flanking part alongside ATTAC?

Raisons d'Agir is one of the founding members of ATTAC, and Bourdieu's work has always been a key point of reference for us. Institutionally, however, he kept his distance. We asked him, without success, to address one general assembly of ATTAC. He had his own circle, not to speak of a court, and hoped to inspire a European social movement. Actually his idea of a European Estates-General came true, but at the Social Forum in Florence, out of a movement he had not foreseen. I saw him once at Millau, but never had a conversation with him. Sadly, just before he died, we had finally arranged to have lunch together. It's a great pity that a closer connexion between Bourdieu and ATTAC was never made, because it would have had a lot of impact.

How do you assess the balance of forces on the wider French intellectual scene, where a whole series of best sellers attacking la pensée unique coexist with the ubiquitous media prominence of its chief exponents, not least in Le Monde itself?

On television and in the press and leading publishing houses, you continue to see the same familiar faces and names everywhere: Philippe Sollers, Alain Minc, Bernard-Henri Lévy, André Glucksmann, Alexandre Adler—not to speak of Cold War veterans like Jean-François Revel. But this media galaxy plays for a middle-brow public, it has little credibility in the intelligentsia proper, based mainly in the educational system. It operates as a mutually supportive mafia, which has been very well described by Serge Halimi in his book *Les nouveaux chiens de garde*—it sold a quarter of a million copies, which gives you an idea of how this coterie is viewed by the great majority of what Régis Debray has called the *bas-clergé* of the French intellectual class. In this layer, my guess is that opinion has been moving strongly in our direction—especially perhaps among economists. Whereas the neoliberal paradigm was completely hegemonic up to a few years ago, now it is strongly challenged, as you can see from the widespread reception of the Fitoussi Report.

How do you see the next phase of development for ATTAC and the World Social Forum?

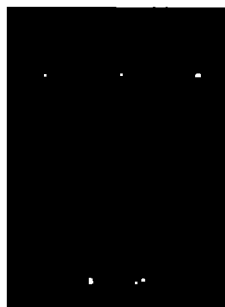
The World Social Forum is not an entity, but a process—a snowballing momentum that is bringing together forces which, though developing in the same direction, were without mutual contact and often completely unaware of each other. A global constellation is coming into being that is beginning to think along the same lines, to share its strategic concepts, to link common problems together, to forge the chains of a new solidarity. All this is now moving with astonishing speed. There has just been an Asian Social Forum in India, an area with which we hitherto had virtually no contact. In Brazil, the government's agenda is set by all the problems identified at Porto Alegre. What will Lula do about the enormous debt that is crushing the country? He has said, of course, that Brazil will be meticulous in meeting its obligations. But will it actually be able to? I believe that a moment of truth is arriving in Argentina and Brazil, which could create the conditions for a radical, world-wide revision of the neoliberal order. If the President of Brazil were to say, 'we are no longer going to pauperize our citizens to pay foreign bond-holders', and Argentina and other Latin American countries followed him, what would happen? Wall Street could do very little about it, since as a leading banker has admitted privately, 'Brazil is too big to fail'. The banks would have little alternative but to 'save the furniture', and accept losses of 30 or 40 per cent rather than write off 100 per cent of their investments.

As for France, Chirac got less than a fifth of the electorate in the first round of the Presidential elections, and the Right that is now in power only just over a third. The political base of the new regime is very, very weak. The government is already extremely nervous, as it sees signs of social tension mounting, particularly about pensions. It is not looking for a confrontation. Growth is slowing to a crawl, the Stability Pact is strangling consumption, fixed costs are rising. If Chirac tries to increase taxes to cover the deficit, there will be an outcry at his betrayal, after so many electoral promises not to; if he tries to slash public expenditure, he will be heading once again for a showdown in the streets. The Right is caught in this dilemma, and its logic is explosive.

What we are seeing today is a movement that, for the first time, is adopting the same perspectives, hitting at the same targets, and developing all over the world, linking local struggles to global objectives. History has accelerated so rapidly in the last ten or fifteen years that there is no reason to think it will stabilize now. I cannot help feeling that what we have achieved together so far will have some effect on what is to come.

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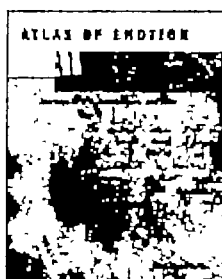
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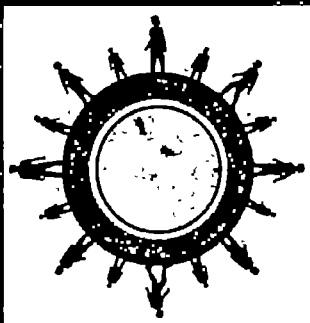
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STEPHEN GRAHAM

LESSONS IN URBICIDE

IN APRIL 2002 the Israeli Defence Force bulldozed a 40,000 square-metre area in the centre of the Jenin refugee camp in the Northern West Bank. A UN report estimated that some 52 Palestinians were killed in the attack, about half of them civilians. In a detailed investigation, Human Rights Watch found that several civilians, including a disabled man, were crushed to death in their homes, because Israeli forces failed to allow relatives time to help them escape; others were used as human shields by the advancing Israelis. Operation Defensive Shield left 140 multi-family housing blocks completely destroyed, 1,500 damaged, and some 4,000 residents homeless, out of a population of 14,000.¹ During the operation, lesser demolitions were also carried out in Nablus, Hebron and Ramallah. Destruction of material infrastructure and cultural and administrative facilities was also widespread.

Such actions made a mockery of official Israeli claims that the IDF's operation was designed purely to dismantle the 'terrorist infrastructure' behind Palestinian suicide attacks, which had left scores of civilians dead on the streets of Israel's cities. The evidence suggests rather that its real purpose was to take advantage of the favourable context of America's global 'war on terror' to destroy the urban foundations of a proto-Palestinian State. Learning from setbacks in Lebanon in the 1980s, the Israelis seem to have targeted, as IDF analyst Dov Tamari put it, 'the social infrastructure, the welfare infrastructure, out of which combatants have grown and on which their families rely'. The appropriate term for this strategy was coined, more or less simultaneously in the early nineties, by Marshall Berman and a group of Bosnian architects: 'urbicide', or the deliberate wrecking or killing of the city.²

The weapon that dominated Operation Defensive Shield was the D-9 armoured Caterpillar bulldozer. Weighing 60 tons and 'built or retrofitted

with steel armour plates, tiny bullet-proof cabin windows, special blades and buckets optimized for concrete demolition and a powerful asphalt-ripper in the rear', the D-9 has been deliberately designed to plough through built-up Palestinian areas with impunity. An Israeli Chief of Staff has made no secret of the fact that 'the Caterpillar D-9 bulldozer is a strategic weapon here'.³ Yet uricide by bulldozer is only one element in a four-pronged geopolitical and military strategy.

Firstly, the demolition of houses and cities is linked to a broader transformation of the landscape, designed to reduce the vulnerability of the growing archipelago of Jewish settlements and highways to Palestinian attack. 'What is most striking in Palestine now is the violence wrought against the land', writes Christian Salmon of the *Autodafe* writers' collective:

Houses are destroyed, olive trees uprooted, orange groves laid waste . . . The bulldozer one runs across at every roadside seems as much a part of the strategy in the ongoing war as the tank. Never has such an inoffensive machine struck me as being more of a harbinger of silent violence. The brutality of war. Geography, it is said, determines war. In Palestine it is war that has achieved the upper hand over geography.⁴

This process is now being extended by the construction of a massive 110 km military barrier—something like a Mediterranean version of the Berlin Wall—along a large part of the 1967 'Green Line', on land seized from Palestinians. On its eastern side, the barrier will have a buffer zone several kilometres wide, cleared of all traces of Palestinian habitation.

Secondly, the forcible 'de-modernization' of Palestinian society has been accompanied by the expansion of Jewish settlements at strategic military sites within Gaza and the West Bank, laced together by new high-tech road, water, energy and waste networks, which sustain high levels of

³ UN, *Report of the Secretary-General Prepared Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution ES-10/10*, New York, 30 July 2002; 'Jenin: IDF Military Operations', *Human Rights Watch*, vol. 14, no. 3, May 2002.

⁴ Dov Tamari, 'Military Operations in Urban Environments', in Michael Desch, ed., *Soldiers in Cities*, Carlisle, PA 2001; Marshall Berman, 'Falling Towers: City Life after Uricide', in Dennis Crow, ed., *Geography and Identity*, Washington 1996, pp. 172–92; Martin Coward, 'Community as Heterogeneous Ensemble', *Alternatives*, vol. 27, 2002, pp. 29–66.

⁵ Mark Zeitoun, 'IDF infrastructure destruction by bulldozer', *The Electronic Intifada*, 2 August 2002; Amos Harel, *Ha'aretz*, 28 December 2000. See also Yael Stein, *Policy of Destruction*, Jerusalem 2002.

⁶ Christian Salmon, 'Sabreen, or patience', www.autodafe.org

mobility and interconnexion, and excellent modern services for their Israeli residents.⁵ Thirdly, Palestinians are facing economic, social and cultural strangulation, as they are trapped by a tightening combination of curfews, raids, checkpoints, walls, sieges, road blocks and surveillance systems into a growing *immobility*. The ever more extensive Israeli appropriation of land, water and air affords new vistas of panoptical vigilance.

Finally, urbicide by bulldozer is also intricately linked to a maze of discriminatory planning and building regulations, which ensure that virtually all new Palestinian housing is constructed 'illegally' in cramped and poorly serviced conditions. These are then reviled by Israeli politicians as uncivilized nests of terrorism. The cumulative effect of this four-fold regime is stark. Billions of dollars have been poured into the creation of Israeli 'facts on the ground'—the upwards of 160 strategic Jewish settlements in the occupied territories—while the Palestinian population has been steadily immiserated. By May 2002, 70 per cent of Palestinians were living below the poverty line of \$2 a day, and 30 per cent of Palestinian children were chronically undernourished. By the end of that month, the UN was feeding half a million Palestinians to keep them from starving.

Targeting infrastructure

The flattening of whole districts of cities by the IDF in the past year is not in itself a new development. Bulldozing has been used as both an instrument of ethnic punishment and a means of territorial re-configuration, ever since Israel's independence in 1948. Since 1967 around 7,000 Palestinian homes have been levelled in the occupied territories.⁶ Up to the late 1990s, the pretext was generally that they had been constructed without a building permit. But more recently large numbers of houses have been bulldozed—in acts that are, in many cases, technically war crimes—to improve IDF monitoring of Palestinian spaces, create buffer zones around Jewish roads and settlements, and exact retribution for acts of Palestinian resistance. Jad Isaac, Director General of the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem, notes: 'These sites are meticulously selected. They are for the bypass roads or new zoning for the settlements, to increase Israeli control'.⁷

⁵ Eyal Weizman, 'The Politics of Verticality', www.opendemocracy.net

⁶ According to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, 2001 estimate.

⁷ Chris Smith, 'Under the Guise of Security', Middle East Research and Information Project, 13 July 2001.

Ariel Sharon—himself long nicknamed the ‘Bulldozer’ by his compatriots—set out his personal philosophy on these matters in an interview with *Ha’aretz* on 26 January 2001. Asked how he would respond to Palestinian sniping at the new Jewish settlements of Gilo, implanted into the Palestinian neighbourhood of Beit Jela, south of Jerusalem, he answered: ‘I would eliminate the first row of houses in Beit Jela’. The reporter enquired: what if the shooting persisted? Sharon replied:

I would eliminate the second row of houses, and so on. I know the Arabs. They are not impressed by helicopters and missiles. For them there is nothing more important than their house. So, under me you will not see a child shot next to his father [a reference to Mohammed Al-Dorra]. It is better to level the entire village with bulldozers, row after row.⁸

Urbicide involves not just the demolition of homes, however, but intensive infrastructural destruction. In May 2001 Israeli Labour Minister Ben Azri called for the dismantling of Palestinian roads, utilities and cultural institutions as a way of ‘making the Palestinians’ life hell’. Operation Defensive Shield put his words into action. Water tanks were riddled with bullets. Electronic communications were bombed and jammed. Roads were dug up and ruined. Electricity transformers were destroyed. Computers were smashed; hard discs stolen. Any cultural or bureaucratic symbol of a proto-Palestinian state was ransacked. Financial damage to infrastructure from the first major offensive alone has been estimated by donors at some \$360 million.⁹ Amira Hass described the wreckage in *Ha’aretz* on 24 April 2002:

It’s a scene that is repeating itself in hundreds of Palestinian offices taken over by IDF troops in the West Bank: smashed, burned and broken computer terminals heaped in piles and thrown in yards, server cables cut, hard disks missing, disks and diskettes scattered and broken, printers and scanners broken and missing, laptops gone, telephone exchanges disappeared or vandalised, and paper files burned, torn, scattered or defaced—if not taken . . . This was not a whim, or crazed vengeance. Let’s not deceive ourselves—this was not a mission to search and destroy the terrorist infrastructure.

Hospitals were bombed and medical equipment looted or smashed. During IDF operations ambulances were prevented from entering the

⁸ Cited in Michael Jansen, ‘The Bulldozer Baron’, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 8–14 February 2001.

⁹ ‘Israeli official calls for striking Palestinian infrastructure’, *Arabic News*, 6 May 2001; Rita Giacaman and Abdullatif Hussein, ‘Life and Health During the Israeli Invasion of the West Bank: The Town of Jenin’, *Indymedia Israel*, 22 May 2002.

war zones, condemning many to a slow, avoidable death, as their blood, literally, seeped away. In some cases medical staff getting through were deliberately attacked: at least five were killed.

This sweep followed earlier assaults by Israel on the developing infrastructure of the Palestinians, much of it financed by EU and UN aid. In January 2002 Josep Pique, President of the EU Council of Foreign Ministers, complained that Israel had repeatedly bombed Gaza airport and harbour, and Palestinian TV and radio transmitters, which together had received around \$20 million in EU support. Under the guise of win-king out sniper lairs, the IDF has also laid waste many fields and olive groves, factories and greenhouses. Economic restrictions have been further tightened since Defensive Shield. On 22 October 2002, Efi Eitam, Minister for Infrastructure in Sharon's coalition, banned olive picking at the height of the harvest, on the grounds that Israeli troops could not protect Palestinians from armed Jewish settlers stealing their yields. On the same day, Eitam made it illegal for Palestinians to bore for water in the West Bank.¹⁰

Viewed against the background of earlier occupation policies, the IDF's campaign to crush the second Intifada has marked a significant shift of emphasis, from ongoing 'pepper-pot' demolitions to more thorough-going urbicide. Behind this new posture lie three interwoven ideological constructions that motivate and justify it in the eyes of Israel's military and political elites.

Demographic anxieties

First, there is a deepening Jewish fear of Arab population growth across the whole territory of the former Mandate. The rapid and spontaneous urbanization that has accompanied this demographic explosion risks jeopardizing long-standing aims of Zionism, by threatening to overwhelm efforts by Israel to promote in-migration of Jews into both Israel itself and the new settlements. Statistical fuel for existential anxieties comes from a range of demographic projections and analyses. For nowhere else in the world are two populations with such contrasting demographic and fertility profiles found so juxtaposed and intermingled. Israeli Jews born in Europe are barely replacing their population (at 2.13 babies per family); Palestinians in Gaza have the highest demographic growth in the

¹⁰ Chris McGreal, *Guardian*, 23 October 2002.

world (7.73 babies per family).¹² Yasser Arafat has called the discrepancy between the birth rates of the two communities a 'biological time-bomb' which he believes is the Palestinians' ultimate geopolitical weapon.

Arnon Sofer, a leading Israeli demographer who has undertaken many analyses for the IDF, has predicted that by 2020 the overall population of the former Mandate—i.e. Israel and the occupied territories—will have risen from 9.7 million to 15.2 million. The Palestinians, numbering some 4.8 million in 2000, will grow by 3.5 per cent a year to about 8.8 million. Jews, numbering 4.9 million in 2000, will grow by 1–2 per cent a year to reach around 6.4 million by 2020. Over the next two decades, therefore, Sofer believes that the proportion of Jews in the territories now under their control will fall from 50.5 to 42 per cent of the total population, threatening little less than 'the disappearance of the Jewish-Zionist state' unless 'preventive measures are taken'. His own preference is for a massive wall to be built, allowing Israel to opt for 'unilateral separation' along the Green Line of the 1967 cease fire, and for citizenship and voting rights to be denied to Israeli Palestinians. For, he argues:

The process of urbanization around Israel's borders will result in a large Arab population, suffering from poverty and hunger, surrounding the Jewish state. These areas are likely to become fertile ground for the evolution of radical Islamic movements . . . In the Arab zone the urbanization process takes on a wild nature, stemming from the absence of planning policy and, in particular, a lack of supervision and enforcement of construction law. Everyone builds as he sees fit, and the result is hundreds of illegal villages spreading in all directions.¹³

Medical imagery

A second ideological construction medicalizes the problem of Palestinian urbanization as a 'cancer' whose spread is undermining the organic constitution of the modern State of Israel. The leading contemporary spokesman of this metaphor is retired Brigadier General Eitam, a former commander in Southern Lebanon, who represented the National Religious Party in the Sharon–Peres coalition. Eitam is now the most prominent military-religious figure on the right of Israel's political

¹² Philippe Fargues, 'Protracted National Conflict and Fertility Change among Palestinians and Israelis', *Population and Development Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, December 2000.

¹³ Arnon Sofer, *Israel, Demography 2000–2020*, Haifa 2001.

spectrum, where he is sometimes even touted as a future Prime Minister. In February 2002, Eitam spoke at a major international conference in Haifa on war and cities in the twenty-first century. In his address, he argued that Israel faced what he called a 'jihad of buildings'. The spontaneous construction of Palestinian housing and refugee camps, within both Israel and the occupied territories, was a 'cancerous tumour' destroying the orderly body of the Israeli State.

Even today, within fast-growing Arab cities of Israel like Galilee a de facto [Palestinian] autonomy is being created, which could in practice turn Israel into the bubble of Tel Aviv, into a kind of pipe state—a country between the Jerusalem–Tel Aviv–Haifa road. Therefore I say that the State of Israel today faces an elusive threat, and elusive threats by their nature resemble a cancer. Cancer is a type of illness from which most people die because they were diagnosed too late. By the time you grasp the scale of the threat, it is already too late to deal with it.

Developing the notion that buildings could be weapons, Eitam went on:

Uncontrolled spontaneous urbanization is a threat of war! The attacks against us are not physical but are aimed at our very order. The threat is not conventional or terrorist, but invasive. In the context of the global War on Terrorism, this is very important. It is destructive not through direct damage but through its invasive spread which will eventually kill off the host state. As of today we have a tumour installed within the Israeli system. This is a cancerous threat; the cells multiply. We see a mosque appearing there; a mass of buildings here. Thus we see order destroyed.¹³

The medical-corporeal metaphors of 'cancers' and 'orderly bodies' that Eitam regularly employs to describe Arab settlements are, of course, strikingly similar to those of *Mein Kampf*, where Hitler describes 'the Jew' as 'a pernicious bacillus' which 'spreads over wider and wider areas'.¹⁴ For Eitam, only one cure is possible for the sickness that now menaces the integrity of the Jewish state: excision.

If the alternative is the suicide of the Israeli State and war is forced on us, then in war—behave as in war. I can definitely see that in consequence not many Arabs will remain here. As a result of war many Palestinians may find themselves again refugees, on the other side, the eastern side, of the river Jordan. They have to be given a choice between enlightened [non-citizen] residence with us or dark citizenship in the Arab states.¹⁵

¹³ Efraim Eitam, 'The Future of Land Warfare'. Presentation at the conference *The City in the 21st Century and War*, Haifa University, 12 February 2002.

¹⁴ *Mein Kampf*, trans. James Murphy, London 1939, p. 172.

¹⁵ Eitam, quoted in Ari Shavit, *Ha'aretz*, 22 March 2002.

Bitan argues that ultimately Israel should strive to persuade or force all Palestinians to leave the former Mandate and find accommodation in Jordan and Sinai. This is a policy, euphemistically labelled 'transfer', that enjoys wide support in Israeli public opinion, and was the subject of a major forum at the Herzliya interdisciplinary centre in March 2002, convened to discuss strategic options for Israel in the context of the 'war on terror'. Mustering 'three hundred prominent personalities from the core of Israel's political and defence establishment', the forum concluded that: 'It will be necessary to find some place for resettlement outside the State of Israel (perhaps to the East of the Jordan) for the Palestinian population of the territories'.¹⁵ An American attack on Iraq could provide an opportunity to begin implementing such schemes, although Jerusalem would no doubt move carefully to avoid embarrassing Washington too publicly.

Israeli leaders have on occasion expressed regret at failing to take advantage of major turmoil elsewhere to put transfer into motion. In 1989 Benjamin Netanyahu told students at Bar-Ilan University that 'Israel should have exploited the repression of the demonstrations in China, when world attention was focused on that country, to carry out mass expulsions among the Arabs of the territories'.¹⁶ Opposition to this prospect within the political establishment, voiced by parties to the left of Likud, is pragmatic rather than principled—concerned at the potential cost in external support for Israel, rather than the fate of the Palestinians themselves. But since the Israeli state was founded on the most successful ethnic cleansing of the post-war world, which drove some 700,000 Palestinians out of their homes, contemporary hawks can appeal to a powerful folk memory in calling for realization of 'the second half of 1948', as transfer is now widely labelled by them.

Unclean spaces

Meanwhile, a third ideological construction has emerged out of the second Intifada, more recent and more far-reaching in its implications. Its exponents are essentially military strategists. They concentrate on the difficulties that the urbanization of Palestinian terrain present to traditional battle manuals. Here Palestinian cities are portrayed

¹⁵ See Tanya Reinhart, 'Israel: the military in charge?', www.opendemocracy.net

¹⁶ Will Youmans, 'Preempting Transfer: Israel May "Transfer" Palestinians During War on Iraq', www.dissidentvoice.org

as potentially impenetrable, unknowable spaces, which challenge the three-dimensional gaze of the IDF's high-technology surveillance systems and lie beyond the reach of much of its heavy-duty weaponry. In this optic, the new urban battlefields render the military doctrines used by the IDF since Independence to fight inter-state wars—artillery bombardments, blitzkrieg tank engagements, mass fighter-bombing attacks—increasingly untenable. Defensive Shield thus represented a significant U-turn for the IDF, which operated since 1948—in line with all military thinking of the postwar period—on the rule that 'entering cities should be avoided, as this offered no benefits whatsoever. Thus, cities and population centres should be bypassed'.⁷

Analysing the implications for Israeli security of his demographic predictions, Sofer explained the need for change:

It will not be possible for [IDF] armoured force, for instance, to manoeuvre in urban areas within the country or outside it . . . It is unreasonable to think of the IDF going out to conquer lands beyond Israeli territory, especially not large cities populated by millions such as Damascus, Beirut, Nablus and Gaza. In the distant and near past the movement of both civilians and military was facilitated by more or less open spaces, passing through rural villages and small towns. In the future, military movement will need to pass through crowded urban systems . . . [and] will be accompanied by terrible destruction and loss of life of a magnitude that is doubtful that both sides can absorb.

To Sofer, the conflagration since 2000 demonstrates that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is now fully urbanized:

The Al-Aqsa intifada is an urban war in which the distance between enemies is measured in metres. There are shots between adjoining neighbourhoods. Terror is brought to Israeli courtyards by Palestinian suicide bombers. Repeated closures of cities on the West Bank are not effective enough, because of a complicated built-up area. So this is an urban war where the ability to manoeuvre and to move is as limited as the ability to use fire-power.⁸

For his part, Eitam contends that buildings and cities are not just weapons of geopolitical occupation. The alteration they impose on orthodox military tactics means that they should be considered weapons of war. The setbacks of the IDF in the streets of Beirut demonstrated that 'in low-intensity fighting there is a paradox. The weak invasive side

⁷ Tamari, 'Military Operations in Urban Environments'.

⁸ Sofer, *Israel, Demography*, pp. 14–15.

addresses the asymmetries of military power by using the building and city as a weapon'. In the new Israeli-Palestinian war, fighters cannot be separated from civilians; they often blend into the civilian population after fighting ceases. Stand-off weapons such as tanks and aircraft are often ineffective, and threaten public relations disasters when they miscarry and kill too many civilians, as in Gaza in October 2002. Surveillance at a distance via satellite systems has diminished power. In these conditions, raids into densely inhabited settlements can become reduced to displays of power largely for psychological effect. The IDF attack on the Khan Yunis refugee camp in early October 2002 was celebrated by Herb Keinon as a demonstration that 'no area—even the most rabidly pro-Hamas or pro-Islamic Jihad stronghold in Gaza—is outside the IDF's reach'.¹⁹

But combat in Palestinian cities also exposes Israeli soldiers to the risks of sniper-fire ambushes, booby traps and home-made bombs (which on several occasions have even destroyed 60-ton Merkava tanks in Gaza). Urbanized terrain can reduce the superiority of high-tech Israeli over low-tech Palestinian forces: heavy armour, when it can get into narrow streets at all, becomes highly vulnerable to counter-attack. Eitam concludes that 'even if you have the best weapons you can't deal with this. A woman or child turns into a terrorist. Eventually, this could destroy the strongest army in the world'. Aversion to built-up zones is pervasive among Israeli military commanders, trained to develop integrated land and air operations in open territory. Interviews with IDF personnel involved in bulldozing settlements, orchards and buffer zones reveal an obsession with uncluttered spaces. 'If we don't keep this territory clean', the Deputy Head of Israel's Civil Administration, David Bar El, said in 1998, 'at the end of the day there will be irreversible facts on the ground that will reduce our "manoeuvring space"'.²⁰ In this telling equation, Palestinian inhabitation is something unclean—to be sanitized and swept away.

Tank streets

In January 2002 Eitam headed a group of retired Israeli generals who presented a plan for dealing with the ongoing Intifada to Sharon. Israel, he repeated to the media at the handover of the document, was 'now like

¹⁹ *Jerusalem Post*, 8 October 2002.

²⁰ Eitam, 'Future of Land Warfare'; Smith, 'Under the Guise of Security'.

a person for whom cancer, not the bullet, is threatening its life. This is a first attempt by the right to present a political-security plan that doesn't make do merely with blocking Palestinian intentions but proposes solutions to the situation'. Its prescriptions proved very close to the strategy adopted by Operation Defensive Shield, which duly reproduced even its imagery. In August 2002 General Moshe Yaalon, the IDF's new Chief of Staff, explained that after the success of the first Israeli assaults on West Bank cities, his objective was now a decisive victory over the 'cancerous' threat posed by the Palestinians.²¹

Tactically, the IDF has adopted a whole set of new urban warfare techniques in its drive to crush the uprising in the occupied territories. To avoid exposure to ambushes and booby traps in the streets of Jenin, Nablus and Tulkaram, it borrowed Soviet innovations from the Second World War: the use of electrically-powered carbide discs and explosive charges to cut through a succession of buildings.²² A new family of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and camera-carrying balloons was deployed to permit real-time monitoring of the complex battles within the cities, and track the movements of key Palestinian fighters and officials, so that missiles could target and kill them. Tanks and infantry worked closely together to minimize the vulnerability of each. Armoured bulldozers paved the way for squadrons of tanks to enter settlements where streets were initially too narrow, and then erased whole districts where resistance was especially intense. The impact of this blue-print was graphically displayed in Jenin. As the IDF attack got under way, armoured bulldozers tore down streets from west to east to allow Israeli tanks to operate, demolishing houses from which gunfire was emerging. Reports of this stage of the battle tell of Israeli soldiers carefully marking houses for demolition with blue markers from detailed maps. Matt Rees, one of the first journalists to enter the camp after the initial wave of fighting had subsided, described the scene:

The street is a new one, carved by a huge bulldozer out of what was once a narrow alley. It leads to a place where gunmen and tanks forged a new, terrifying chapter in the long wars of the Middle East. The alley was just three feet wide before the Israeli army sent its heavily armoured Caterpillar D-9 down what is now a rutted track.²³

²¹ Amos Harel, *Ha'aretz*, 1 February 2002; Ewen MacAskill, *Guardian*, 27 August 2002.

²² Arie O'Sullivan, *Jerusalem Post*, 8 March 2002.

²³ Matt Rees, *Time*, 5 May 2002.

Reconnaissance drones and balloon-lifted cameras gave IDF strategists an excellent real-time view, both of the newly created tank 'streets' that quickly ripped through the densely built urban fabric of the camp, and of the route of infantry teams who blasted their way through walls to avoid booby traps and ambushes in existing streets. When the IDF lost 13 soldiers in an ambush, the bulldozing intensified dramatically, destroying wholesale the heart of the camp's Hart-Al-Hawashin district—the 'cobra's head' of suicide-bomb planning, according to the public relations branch of the IDF. Retired IDF Brigadier General Gideon Avidor noted that 'as a result of this ambush we stopped playing nice and polite'.²⁴

Learning from Jenin

A revealing insight into the psychology of those operating the huge armoured bulldozers in the middle of this second phase of the battle came from a remarkable interview with one of the drivers, published in *Yediot Aharonot*, Israel's biggest tabloid, on 31 May. Moshe Nissim—a middle-aged IDF reservist—spoke at length of his experience at the wheel of one of the dozen D-9 bulldozers unleashed in Jenin when, in a frenzied period of 75 hours non-stop demolition, he completed much of the levelling of the centre of the camp. He recalled:

Before we went in I asked some guys to teach me [how to operate a D-9]. They taught me how to drive forward and make a flat surface . . . For three days I just erased and erased . . . I kept drinking whisky to fight off fatigue. I made them a stadium in the middle of the camp! I didn't see dead bodies under the blade of the D-9 . . . But if there were any I don't care. I found joy with every house that came down because I knew that they didn't mind dying but they cared about their homes. If you knocked down their house you buried 40 or 50 people for generations . . . [After it was finished] I begged for more work: 'Let me finish another house!' I wanted to destroy everything. To level everything . . . It's not that I wanted to kill. Just the houses. Believe me, we demolished too little.²⁵

After the demolitions, all attempts at rebuilding and removing unexploded ordinance were blocked by the IDF. As Jonathan Cook reported in the *Guardian*: 'Keeping the heart of the camp in ruins will make Jenin more accessible next time the tanks rumble in'—as they have done several times since.²⁶

²⁴ 'The Battle of Jenin: April 2002', www.urbanoperations.com

²⁵ Tzadok Yeheskeli, *Yediot Aharonot*, 31 May 2002.

²⁶ *Guardian*, 3 June 2002.

If the IDF's shift towards urbicide denies to Palestinians the fruits of a modernization that Israelis themselves have long enjoyed, it has also been watched as a potentially instructive model by forces abroad. Military planners are matter-of-fact throughout the world. Just as Israeli staff officers had no compunction studying the lessons of the Wehrmacht's attack on the Warsaw Ghetto, as preparation for the onslaught on Jenin, so their counterparts in the Pentagon will have paid close attention to Defensive Shield. Needing to plan for operations in densely built-up Islamic cities—Kabul, Kandahar, Basra, Baghdad—the US military could ill afford to ignore lessons from the West Bank, after its misfortunes in Mogadishu. On 17 June 2002, the *Army Times* reported that 'while Israeli forces were engaged in what many termed a brutal—some even say criminal—campaign to crush Palestinian militants and terrorist cells in West Bank towns, US military officials were in Israel seeing what they could learn from that urban fight'. Lt. Col Dave Booth—who oversees US Marine-IDF exchanges on urban warfare—reported in another article in the *Marine Corps Times* that the Marines wanted 'to learn from the Israeli experience in urban warfare and the recent massive search-and-destroy operations for Palestinian insurgents in the West Bank'.²⁷

The Marine's Warfighting Lab has since used these detailed exchanges—which culminated in a Joint Chiefs of Staff delegation to Israel between 17 and 23 May 2002—to 'make changes to the Corps' urban war-fighting doctrine to reflect what worked for the Israelis'.²⁸ A major consultation then occurred between Israeli and Pentagon specialists on urban warfare at a Defence Policy Advisory Group meeting in Washington in early June. In September the Joint Chiefs of Staff laid out a new doctrine for urban operations, taking account of lessons learnt from Jenin and elsewhere, with a view to an impending attack on Iraq.²⁹

But whatever the outcome of current preparations for a second Gulf War, they are unlikely to see the last of the agenda set by the IDF. There is a growing realization amongst US political and military strategists that the Pentagon's reliance on globe-spanning—high-technology and satellite-coordinated—aerial and missile bombardments may

²⁷ *Marine Corps Times*, 10 June 2002. Quoted in Mustapha Karkouti, 'Israel pulls the wool over world's eyes', 11 June 2002, www.gulf-news.com

²⁸ Christian Lowe, *Army Times*, 17 June 2002.

²⁹ US Defence Department, *Doctrine for Urban Operations*, Washington, DC 2002.

paradoxically enhance the geopolitical significance of urban complexes as a key terrain of resistance to American hegemony. 'As the US's ability to detect and strike targets from remote distances grows,' wrote Richard Sinnreich of the *Washington Post* shortly after the first Jenin battle, 'so also does an enemy's incentive to respond by locating his military forces in cities, where concealment and protection are easier. In an urbanizing world . . . scenes such as those in Jenin are likely to become the rule in war rather than the exception'.³⁰

Lairs of resistance

Owing perhaps to the ambivalence of the US military about big cities at home, the nature of urbanization—as a complex sociological and physical transformation of whole societies—is ignored in such preoccupations.³¹ Attention concentrates simply on the fact that here opponents don't all stand out in open deserts or fields, to be conveniently annihilated in video-game succession. In many commentaries, a frustration that cities simply get in the way of the latest satellite-driven cruise missiles and aerial weapons, so expensively developed by the US military-industrial complex over decades, is palpable. How many more adversaries will follow the lead of Iraq's hapless soldiers, mown down in the virtualized aerial shoot-outs of 1991, or the Serbian forces dispatched so effectively from 20,000 feet in 1999?

Nostalgia for this clinical scenery construes cities of the Third World as, by contrast, cauldrons of animalistic, medieval opposition to modern forms of warfare. 'When faced with an enemy willing, even eager, to put his own civilian population at risk, all military choices are bad', continues Sinnreich. 'The greater America's military supremacy, the more likely it is that future enemies will seek to win, through deliberate and cynical manipulation of civilian casualties and damage, political victories that they are incapable of winning by force of arms'. Hence current fears, no doubt much exaggerated, that an invasion of Iraq will this time be met, not by any attempted defence of its territorial frontiers, but by a house-to-house defence of Baghdad, along Stalingrad lines.

³⁰ *Washington Post*, 7 May 2002.

³¹ See, for example, Ralph Peters, 'Our soldiers, their cities', *Parameters*, Spring 1996; James Kitfield, 'War in the urban jungles', *Air Force Magazine*, vol. 81, no. 12.

A staggering hubris runs through this rhetoric. For the most obvious explanation of why resistance to US imperial power—as indeed Israeli occupation—has been, and will be, forced to exploit the defensive possibilities of cities is usually ignored. Prosaically, the urbanization of the poor is unstoppable. The world is becoming a patchwork of cities. Increasingly, there is *nowhere else to go*. In such a setting, cities are indeed the natural habitat of anyone who falls within the ever-widening search for targets and opponents in the war on terror.

THIRD TEXT

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

What is wrong with art today?

Can we just describe it as 'conceptual bullshit'* without analysing the roots of its present crisis? Is it still possible to produce meaningful art within the individualism of bourgeois consciousness? If there is no longer an enlightened context or patronage for art, except for corporate sponsorship or the marketplace which inevitably turns art into a commodity, are there other alternatives?

For the answers read the Special Issue of
Third Text, no 61, December 2002

Art, Politics & Resistance?

Contributors: Mark Hutchinson, Rasheed Araeen, Terry Atkinson, Dave Beech
John Roberts, Jonathan Vickey, Matthew Feldman, Patricia Bickers
J J Charlesworth, Ben Fitton, Mikkel B Rasmussen

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*A comment by Culture Minister Kim Howells on seeing the work of
the 2002 Turner Prize nominees



LUTZ NIETHAMMER

THE INFANCY OF TARZAN

IN THE RECENT Disney cartoon of Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan saga, there is an affecting post-structuralist Ur-scene that does not appear in the original text of 1914; it has more than one meaning. The little white child of a pair of castaways is rescued by a black ape-mother, after his own parents are torn to pieces by a tiger in the jungle; she brings him up in place of the children she has lost. But there are continual conflicts with other members of the gorilla band, incited by its male chief against this alien addition to the family. Even when he plays with his contemporaries, the human child is made painfully aware, as in Lacan's mirror stage, that he is unlike them. After one such conflict the child, seeing his face reflected in a puddle, smears it with mud to make it more like those around him. Whereupon his ape-mother solves Tarzan's crisis by constructing an identity for him. She wipes the grimy mask from his face and bids him close his eyes. To let him realize what they have in common, she lays the palm of his hand on the naked sole of her paw. Then she lets him feel the beating of his heart, and takes him gently in her arms, so that he can hear her own, consoling him with words of postmodern comfort: 'You see? We're identical!'

Thus, shutting his eyes to empirical reality, she teaches him—by selective perception and emotion—to discover a core of being common to Man and Ape. Thus is a collective identity constructed and lived out. Faith in her love allows him to square a sense of his difference with the conviction that he nevertheless belongs to the band. Still, she is forced to add pensively, the gorilla chief 'doesn't get it!' Obviously, the leader of such a band needs to keep his eyes peeled, and lacks the gift of second sight. Only many years later, as he encounters others of Tarzan's kind, does he at last distinguish between the foundling and other men, and—acknowledging Tarzan's countless heroic deeds on the group's

behalf—accept this worthy stranger into the *Leitkultur* of the apes, granting him, as it were, the Green Card of the gorillas.

An uncanny conjuncture

This touching little parable from the box-office shows in the simplest way, 1) what a declaration of collective identity looks like; 2) how its construction operates; and 3) the way its semantics penetrate even the fond vocabulary of children today.

1. In the strictest sense, a statement of collective identity is an empirically false proposition. It is distinct from a mere collective designation—such as ‘the Romans’ or ‘the women’—in that it is not simply a lax linguistic short-cut. It asserts a common essence, to which a special meaning is attached, beneath apparent surface differences.
2. The construction of collective identities arises out of broader practices of defining and delimiting communities. As a rule—though not as it happens in our original example, to which I will return—these dissolve the internal differences within any given collectivity in favour of a common external demarcation. Usually of formulaic brevity, avoiding detailed description of the traits of the essence at stake, the claim mobilizes the term ‘Identity’ (evocative of the most elementary proposition in Western logic: $A = A$) for an air of intellectual necessity and precision. It is most effectively addressed to those who do not think logically or empirically, but trust in science.
3. The spread of such claims is possible only in communities where religious (or traditional) norms and affiliations have become shaky or uncertain. Surrogate constructions then offer magical formulae that suggest hidden ways of belonging, delimiting and persisting. In this sense, the jungle boy—stripped of every cultural tradition—is the ideal recipient of his ape-mother’s somewhat forced Darwinian explanation of the identity between man and beast. Today, apparently, every child understands such solace. In a mere two or three decades, such tropes have become a normative substitute for any stable tradition, affiliation or meaning.

Since the 70s, this kind of postmodern magic has spread from the media and cultural studies to every part of the political spectrum, from furthest

Left and Right—the Red Army Faction or the *Nouvelle Droite*—to the Centre. There it now typically decks out a rickety nationalism in new attire, troubling precedents forgotten. But it is also ubiquitous above and below the level of the nation-state, wherever politically more effective units have to be forged out of variegated situations or structures. So we find it in all kinds of regionalism and ethnic politics. Much earlier, such constructivist essentialism operated within the economic domain, endowing any heteroclitite jumble of firms with the reassuring image of a common ‘corporate identity’. In the political arena, it has transformed the ethnic and gender minorities of what was once the American melting pot into the rainbow coalitions of ‘identity-politics’.

For over two decades now, formulas of collective identity have likewise inspired both the Jewish world and the Third World—in each case to dramatically ambiguous effect. The relatively early and keen interest in ‘Jewish identity’ was a response both to the extraordinary range of national and cultural differences among Jews—in Israel, in the United States and in the rest of the world—and to the challenges that secularization and territorial dispersal posed to a unique ethno-religious community, after the murderous consequences of one of the ‘collective identities’ ascribed to them by others, in anti-Semitic pogroms and the Shoah. The contemporary formula of ‘Jewish identity’ renders feelings of belonging and solidarity at once stronger and more anonymous; postulating common bonds without betraying their basis to an antagonistic outside world, or lapsing into a discourse of race that once linked some of the proudest figures of assimilation and conversion (Freud or Disraeli) to their most enraged opponents and executioners. It built bridges between Zionists and anti-Zionists; poor immigrants arriving in Israel and wealthy rentiers investing their capital elsewhere; religious believers of the most diverse observance and committed Enlightenment critics of religion. It transvalued, as the enormity of the Shoah gradually became visible and speakable, the criteria of mass murder into those of self-respect, mourning and solidarity. Should that be openly debated? Empirically, there was still less a Jewish ‘identity’ than any other, which is certainly why it has had such exceptional force as a moral interpellation. Historically, the formula operates all too understandably as a code-word for the construction of a post-catastrophic community. Yet, at once emphatic and obscuring, it makes any clarifying public agreement over practices and traditions more difficult.

In the especially precarious conditions of developing countries, the same mechanism—an internalization of fate become demonstration of pride—has generated an intense output of collective-identity constructions. But here the original initiative came from the outside. In the United States, where notions of ‘civic culture’ and ‘political culture’ were invented by modernization specialists in the 60s, the fashionable theories of Erik Erikson about individual identity were applied to society, for the purpose of projecting a ‘political identity’ onto entire countries. The think-tanks of the Cold War wanted to safeguard the democratization of post-colonial regimes in the Third World against national liberation movements, which were often supported by the Soviet Union or China. In this setting, where many post-colonial states had inherited from imperialism arbitrary frontiers that cut across or mixed up traditions, and where local or tribal cultures bore no relation to political structures, ‘nation-building’ was posed as a prerequisite of democracy. Such states, it was explained, needed cultural strategies to reorient societies towards their ‘political identity’. In other words the task was to create a people, who would then provide a stable base for democracy.

In appropriating these strategies to navigate from colonialism to democracy, however, nation-building not only often appealed to pre-colonial traditions—not exactly oriented to modernization—but mobilized anti-Western sentiments bequeathed by the liberation struggle. Ample technical means for creating ‘political’ identity were thereby transferred to national ‘cultural’ identities, with an ‘invention of tradition’ whose affective charge was reinforced by a global repudiation of the West, and which by no means necessarily prepared the way for democratization. In 1982 ‘cultural identity’ was erected by UNESCO—in which developing countries were now a majority—into a fundamental right of nations. Thereafter the term entered the vocabulary of reform within the Soviet empire, where its permissive emptiness served as a cover for the intellectual preparation—and for the emotive content—of various forms of separatism. Since 1990, all of the post-communist states in Eastern Europe have equipped themselves—mostly in regressive register—with a ‘national identity’ that has tended to push civil rights and democratic movements into the background.

In short, formulaic constructions of collective identity have become a symptomatic signature of the present. They are now ubiquitous wherever societies, regardless of their actual differentiation, are transfigured

into seamless communities, and assured of continuity by symbolic demarcation and fabrication of meaning.

Secret sources

In a recent book, *Collective Identity: Secret Sources of an Uncanny Conjecture*, I have sought to pin down the origins of this injection of the semantics of identity into the social and political realm, and to see what it might tell us about the magics of a postmodern world. Contradicting the general view that 'collective identity' should be seen either as a traditional component of classical idealist philosophy, or that it emerged in the 60s as a social extension of American theories of individual identity, I hope to have shown that its intellectual roots lie in Europe after the First World War. There it was adumbrated by precursors of the most varied hues, who included post-religious ideologues such as Carl Schmitt on the Right and Georg Lukács on the Left; cultural diagnosticians such as the post-Christian ('Germanic') Jung and the post-Judaic ('Jewish') Freud; a sociologist of the construction of collective memories, virtualizing past and present, like Maurice Halbwachs; and a dystopian novelist like Aldous Huxley, author of *Brave New World*. There is no space here to explain why such different figures turned between 1916 and 1931 to utilize notions of collective identity for utterly opposite projects of community construction. Let me simply summarize some conclusions that flow from this intellectual history.

Identity acquired its contemporary prominence—the word appears in the title of some three hundred books in Germany and thousands more in America; the numbers have doubled every decade since the 60s—as a password to the collective. Here it features not as any explicit theory, but as a magical incantation in the borderlands between constitutional politics, social philosophy, ethnic ascription, sociological analysis of tradition, and bio-social utopia. It works both to obscure a wide range of questionable contents—scientific, political or religious—and to make them discursively presentable. Since it lacks any internal structure, yet possesses a certain logico-philosophical resonance, the concept of Identity is particularly well suited to function as an ostensive screen, camouflaging vagueness of content in a blaze of expression.

Structurally, identity finds substance only in demarcation from what it is not—for which it inevitably requires additional determinations. These

specify differences ranging from exclusive subjective-identifications, or we-feelings, to unconscious mind-sets, purged of the heterogeneity of the actual collectives in question, and of the relative degree of their distance from what they are not. Within this pattern of perception, there are no barriers to escalation in the intensity of its segregation from what is different. A dynamic of demarcation is inherent in the concept of identity, tending towards maximization of conflict.

Examples of such additional specifications include *völkisch*-German in the democratic identity theorized by Schmitt; Marxist-revolutionary in the proletarian version of Lukács; bio-technological or media-driven in Huxley's prophecy of a caste to come. In each case, the supplement is decisive in constituting the identity in question. But it is a peculiarity of the concept to allow such narrower determinations of its content to recede into the background or fade away altogether. Ascriptions of this sort acquire a sheen of pseudo-scientific objectivity, becoming norms of conduct in an occult substitute setting. Operating in sharply disputed political contexts of every kind, and designating what was diverse under the rubric of the same, identity was a concept destined to misunderstanding and manipulation from the start.

A closer look, however, allows us to distinguish three basic types of collective-identity construction:

1. *Ideologies of political homogenization.* These pose as objective constructions of a historical subject in the framework of an ideology, homogenizing it by dissociation and expulsion of the other. In the 20s, post-religious forces used residues of religion to override all too evident social and political differences, and lay the foundations for the totalitarian spirit of a future state power. In the last few decades a 'light' version of this type of fundamentalism has spread in the form of national identities. These generally lack any background in a philosophy of history, and only rarely possess a religious horizon. They modernize nationalism by masking it as identity-politics. Media campaigns inculcate uniformity in majority populations by selection and manipulation of the past.
2. *Constructions of cultural difference.* These are a defensive (or otherwise subjective) expression of groups that are poorly equipped for political purposes—whether because their we-feelings are only activated by

outside pressures, or prompted by unsatisfied validity claims, or crystallized by precarious cultural traditions. In the battle against oppression, demands for validation are accentuated and made anonymous in order to render them proof against external assault. This type can be seen in early postulations of Jewish identity, and forms of resistance to totalitarian exactions in the interwar period that froze into a helpless appeal to the emotions. Since the 60s, such postulates have become the central mode of identity-politics for ethnic and gender minorities, and in post-colonial societies. But the more explicit multicultural claims become, the more problematic are their demarcation criteria, either because they clash with rival claims of the same kind, or because they evolve into ideologies that reify single-purpose movements with different components, unified only by *one* feature in common.

3. *Diagnoses of a foundering mass civilization.* A certain kind of *Kulturkritik* gave laconic form to social-Darwinist conceptions of the extinction of the conscious subject from mass civilizations—held to be either plunging into barbaric regression, or petrifying into a worldwide replica of the topsy-turvy modernity of America and its blind social inequality. The first version is being amplified in current bio-political theories. The second has shifted from critical irony to dominant reality, in official conceptions of European identity as a regional military power whose relations with other parts of the earth are ranked according to force and wealth.

After the First World War, it was loss of religious faith and decay of socio-cultural traditions that were the most conspicuous correlates of new, magical invocations of community. Collective identity first becomes conscious and programmatic in the perception of its absence. Employing old validity claims, a new convention was created.

Collective identity as norm

In tracing the hidden origins of today's overflowing semantics of identity, and its main functional variants, I have omitted the web of its factional applications from the extreme Right through the Centre to the radical Left. That different political tendencies can read quite contrasted meanings into traditional terms like, say, 'people' or 'nation', is nothing new. On the contrary, such signifiers carry the history of their various

interpretations and problems with them. That is as it should be. For they are not only a means of communication, but also offer a mnemonic of their uses and misuses, and of disputes over their meanings. This ambivalent ballast of tradition can lead to many different acceptations of a term. But it does not hinder public understanding: rather it enriches discussion by compelling participants to adopt tighter definitions of them.

The same, however, cannot be said of formulas of identity (and other comparable 'connotative stereotypes' or 'plastic words', as the linguist Uwe Poerksen calls them). These do not derive from any traditional usage. Nor do they come from any lexicon of scientific concepts, though they sound as if they do. For they possess neither precise definition, nor power of theoretical explanation, nor capacity of empirical illustration. They were coined by intellectuals to hide weak arguments with lofty phrases, by investing a foundational—yet completely empty—operational term of Western logic with portentous social meaning. The gesture of signification which seeks at once public validation and immunity from critical scrutiny is the only common element in talk of collective identity.

It might appear that one could distinguish between a bad identity—illegitimate, dominative, ideological—and a good—legitimate, defensive, existential—and separate the one from the other by historical reference to past and future, which are not to be judged by such ethical categories but according to criteria of truth and falsity. Yet there are weighty objections to doing so. For essentialist declarations involve reductive procedures that always refer back to the perspective of the beholder; they are not amenable to assessments of truth or falsehood. If you close your eyes like little Tarzan, you can believe them in your heart, or share them in a yearning to belong and be recognized. But no wave of the wand can abolish the differences, in other respects and occasions not exactly unimportant, between humans and apes. Postulates of identity, always at once constructivist and essentialist, have no cognitive status. They compel no transmission between subjectivities. They can only be believed. Their function is to found a community on a civil religion.

Politically, one cannot overlook the fact that the most fateful of these operations of ideological absorption—Schmitt's explanation of the affinity between democracy and dictatorship, or Lukács's theory of a proletarian revolution without the real proletariat—owe their efficacy to the defensive layout of their construction. It was German defeat in the First World

War that created the strategy that vengeance must start by driving out the heritage of liberalism and all that was 'dissimilar'—later, everything not consubstantial with the democratic dictatorship of the leader. It was the conviction of five centuries of martyrdom of the proletariat, its exploitation and alienation as the last class of human history, that gave its intellectual vanguard the good conscience for a violent revolution, and thereafter periodic purges of the now universal class and its party. The ideologies of political identity stem from the same defensive differentiation that prompts minorities to identity politics; but in the case of potential majorities, they free the state's monopoly of violence from the restraints that granted rights to minorities and the exploited in the first place.

Vice-versa, defensive cultural differentiations—essentialist constructions of identity that obscure internal discrepancies and zones of juridical conflict among real, resilient forms of belonging—proceed to ideological absorption as soon as they lay claim to public validation or assert themselves as a dominant doctrine. In such cases it is not the emancipatory charm of hand-knit cultural memories that comes to the fore. Rather, invented traditions must be objectified as justification of legal claims for privileged compensation (or their waiver)—as in 'affirmative action' in the United States, or even in rights of citizenship, which always exclude others. If such conflicts of attribution escalate, as they tend to do in particular over distributive issues, out of the diversity of cultural memories there emerge—even in originally post-religious and anti-racist contexts—final appeals to nature (usually 'race') and religion, as hard factors no longer subject to dispute. In clashes in the public realm and claims on state power, postulates of collective identity develop a fundamentalist drive, which impedes or destroys the possibility of public agreement or equal legal respect for the other.

The inclination to such beliefs becomes all the stronger when the 'self-evident' truth of communal traditions appears to be called into question. That is why the collective projection of experiences of victimization creates such a strong propensity to believe in the constructions of civil religion, which can never be equally valid for all. Rather, the superficial sameness and normative excess of collective-identity formulations—as if we must all accept some collective identity, indeed just *one*: solid, secure and clear to others; in other words *exactly* what it can never be—tend to conceal a tangle of claims of highly unequal validity. So long as

talk about identity dominates the public sphere, practical conclusions and intellectual agreement are impossible.

Collective identities become salient where there are numerous existential anxieties and competing validity claims which seek to assert themselves ideologically or through the media, at the expense of internal differences, or to create a protected public space for what each considers essential in their history and kind. Reconciliation of such identities becomes all the more difficult, as the concrete dangers that generated the intensity of their claims are occluded in a fundamentalist ideology that withdraws them from public debate. An eirenic union of civil-religious identities is thus improbable, for it would require the elimination of the insecurities that produce them. Nor, in fact, is any such union desirable, since it would put all validity claims—even the weirdest, least legitimate and most dangerous—on an equal footing.

After identity?

Is the wave of identity politics now subsiding? It is difficult to say. In the media at large, it still seems to be waxing. There are some indications, however, that in intellectual debates it is breaking. A significant indication may be the new catchword in cultural studies: 'hybridity'. This still presupposes collective identities but, in so far as it suggests that everyone can affiliate, simultaneously or in sequence, to widely diverse communities and combine their essential characteristics *à la carte*, it represents an advance. For the grip of exclusive collectives on the individual is thereby broken. That a person's conception of him- or herself develops in an encounter with widely differing collective models and claims—of gender, profession, origin, class, nationality and all kinds of sub- and supra-national cultures and institutions—seems obvious enough. Yet it remains a depressing fact that in theorizing itself as a form of 'bastardization', the new individualism still ascribes decisive formative power to a mixture of inheritable group traits. It would seem to be difficult to step out of the fog of identity politics, once its propositions and attributions have been accepted as valid.

Another sign that the wave may have crested can be seen in attempts to theorize a form of identity that does not exclude difference. These are now linked most prominently to the name of Jacques Derrida, and so have been referred to dark passages in the 'onto-theo-logic' of the

late Heidegger, who in 1957 wrote: 'Being belongs with Thinking in an identity, whose essence derives from that "allowing-to-belong-together" which we call an Event.' I will not presume to decide whether a straight line leads from this dictum to Derrida's axiom that: 'What is proper to a culture is not to be identical to itself . . . but . . . to differ with itself'. From this notion Derrida, in *The Other Heading*, derives not only such duties as 'welcoming foreigners . . . in order to integrate them' but also 'to recognize and accept their otherness'; to respect 'differences, idioms, minorities, singularities, but also the universality of formal rights, the desire for translation, agreement and univocity, the law of the majority, opposition to racism, nationalism and xenophobia.'¹ I will only note that in a vocal sector of Euro-Atlantic culture the cult of identity has left behind, like the debris of some glacier, a catalogue of the virtues of the non-identical and of the incorporation—rather than exclusion—of difference.

Tarzan's ape-mother is an example for children. She brings the helpless minority of the other into the protection of the band, extending—or should one say, reducing?—the identity of the gorillas by what connects them to the little human, and to what longing and blind love can be brought to believe: the identity of difference. But what neither Walt Disney nor the philosophers explain is the politics at work in all this: the role of power. All the ape-mother knows is that the chief of the band cannot see this identity. He sees only its difference from the dominant culture.

Indifference or alarmism?

Let us turn therefore to Washington and see what role identity plays in the calculations of those who counsel the last superpower. Is our alarm justified or is identity ultimately a matter of indifference? The occupants of the White House may change, but its leading advisers come from the same—soundly conservative, admirably informed, globally concerned—stable. Both argue that 'cultural identity' will play a decisive part in the future of the world, and both—how could it be otherwise?—use the formula without defining it. But the scenarios they offer are in marked contrast.

Francis Fukuyama told the Republican victors of the Cold War that the battle is over. There is no longer any adversary capable of matching

¹ *The Other Heading*, Bloomington, IN 1992, pp. 9, 77–8 (translation modified).

American power. So history is also over. In globalized post-history, there is economy, administration and play. But after all the feats and fun, we will become no more than the sporting animals foreseen by Nietzsche, and/or bore ourselves to death. No doubt there are other issues: limits to growth and ecology, identity and cultural difference. These will still give us trouble in particular cases. But in general: no problem, or more accurately, problems only of a second rank. If limits to growth should persist (which is not foreordained), they will hold for everyone, and so will not alter the distribution of power in the world.

Questions of culture and identity are a bit more complicated, because certain fundamentalists have not understood the 'power of the video-recorder' (a decade later: of the internet). But it is only a matter of time before globalized consumption overcomes the residues of religion—including Islam—and cultural identity is domesticated. The West, battlefield of world history, shows the way. In a mere half-century, Europeans have reduced the nationalist claims of their various cultural identities to the level of a peaceable conversation, within an overarching federal order of ballot and market. That is not only the most desirable, but also the most probable model of a pacified One World—neutered cultural identities without sovereignty, lashed into the iron cages of modernization; a colourful drapery of local traditions for good feeling; a quiet playground for once conflictual cultures.

A little later a very different radar scanned the mists of the new world order. Samuel Huntington, a prominent adviser to the Democrats, decided that Fukuyama—a specialist on communism—was unwittingly a carrier of the materialist bacillus from the East, who had failed to recognize the overpowering potential of cultural identity for war. In Huntington's view, globalization and neoliberalism are grossly overrated as pacemakers of One World. The economy is a subordinate force that does not level the great world cultures—whose identities are anchored in their respective religions—but adapts itself differently to each of them. That is why no One World is in prospect, but rather a universe of great cultural spheres endowed with different economic potentials, competing with each other under the dominance of their respective hegemons. In this space, any question that cultural identities will be negotiable, as equally valid or invalid—hence indifferent—forces is entirely ruled out. On the contrary: they will be the soil of mighty power struggles and military conflicts, 'the clash of civilizations' to come.

The cultural wars of the future—here too, Europe is transparently the model, though now the Europe of rival kingdoms, religious wars and national hatreds—will unleash two interacting kinds of escalation: on the one hand, battles for power between the leading states of the major civilizations; on the other, border conflicts over the irredenta of each. The trigger for these last is already clear: collective identity versus difference. Such conflicts originate in zones of mixed population along the frontiers of rival civilizations, generating waves of cultural solidarity in their rear, and eventually unleashing a spiral of fundamentalism. As demarcation from others requires objectification of the hallmarks of identity, and 'bloody borders' demand final reasons, semi-secularized cultures plunge into regressive outbursts of religion and violence that lead to inextricable conflicts.

The scenarios of Fukuyama and Huntington are not remote fantasies, but extrapolations from the knowledge of those who wield power in America. Behind their projections of collective identity lie diametrically opposed cultural diagnoses, although the contrasts between them are never fully argued through. Both, however, revolve around the regressive implications of a culturalism that ultimately threatens to erase the distinction between humans and animals. For the advocate of a globalized modernity, cultural particularity is a compensation of little moment on the path of man towards destiny—Nietzsche's vision of an animality at play. For the prophet of culture wars, the world is disintegrating into impermeable, intransigent spheres of barbaric fanaticism and violence.

Disney's post-structuralist idyll, in which the borders between animal and man can be crossed by loving adoption of the Other, seems far away. The new fairy tales of our philosophers are as touching as that of Tarzan's ape-mother. But the head gorillas have to keep their eyes open. Yet alas, they wear shades that obscure any clear sight of our chances and dangers today. Through the same optic, one is bored by the drone of crickets or croaking of frogs, the other appalled by the baying of wolves. But perhaps we should for once put the magical formulas of identity aside, and risk a less distorted look at everything that wears a human face. We might then discern—this side of all bestiarie—the possible forms of our sociability.

ANTONIO NEGRI'S NEW BOOK



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Antonio Negri is one of the most significant figures in contemporary political thought. He is the author of several works including *The Savage Anomaly*, *Labor of Dionysus* (co-authored with Michael Hardt), *Insurgencies*, and most recently, *Empire*, written with Michael Hardt.

Time for Revolution is translated by Matteo Mandarini.

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ON THE FIRST POP AGE

AN EPIC POEM OF EARLY Pop by the architects Alison and Peter Smithson, in an essay published in November 1956, three months after the landmark Independent Group exhibition 'This is Tomorrow' opens at the Whitechapel Gallery: 'Gropius wrote a book on grain silos, Le Corbusier one on aeroplanes, and Charlotte Perriand brought a new object to the office every morning; but today we collect ads.' Forget that Gropius, Corbusier and Perriand were also media-savvy; the point is polemical: *they*, the protagonists of modernist design, were cued by functional structures, vehicles, things, but *we*, the celebrants of Pop culture, look to 'the throw-away object and the pop-package' for our models. This is done partly in delight, the Smithsons suggest, and partly in desperation: 'Today we are being edged out of our traditional role by the new phenomenon of the popular arts—advertising . . . We must somehow get the measure of this intervention if we are to match its powerful and exciting impulses with our own.'¹ Others in the IG, Reyner Banham and Richard Hamilton above all, share this urgency.

I

Who are the prophets of this epic shift? The first *we* to 'collect ads' is Eduardo Paolozzi, who calls the collages made from his collection 'Bunk' (an ambivalent homage to Henry Ford?). Although this 'pinboard aesthetic' is also practised by Nigel Henderson, William Turnbull and John McHale, it is Paolozzi who, one night in April 1952, projects his ads, magazine clippings, postcards and diagrams at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, in a demonstration that underwrites the distinctive method of the IG, an anti-hierarchical juxtaposition of archival images disparate, connected, or both at once. The 'Bunk' idea is developed in such shows as 'Parallel of Life and Art', directed by Paolozzi, the Smithsons and



Eduardo Paolozzi, *I Was a Rich Man's Plaything*, 1947

Henderson in 1953, 'Man, Machine and Motion', produced by Hamilton in 1955, and 'This is Tomorrow', which grouped artists, architects and designers in twelve teams in 1956; it is also elaborated in such practices as the 'tabular image' of Hamilton, as I will discuss.

If Paolozzi suggests an aesthetic paradigm that is at once collagist and curatorial, it is Banham, the great *animateur* of the IG, who provides the theoretical arguments for a Pop Age. 'We have already entered the Second Machine Age,' he writes in *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (1960), 'and can look back on the First as a period of the past.'¹ In this dissertation, conceived in the midst of the IG, Banham exploits his distance, both historical and ideological, from the framers of modern architecture (including his advisor Nikolaus Pevsner) in order to redefine its meaning. He challenges the functionalist and rationalist biases of Gropius and Corbusier, Giedion and Pevsner—that form follow function and technique—and recovers the Expressionist and Futurist imperatives of modern architecture that they neglected. In so doing Banham also advances the imaging of technology as the principal criterion for design—for design of the Second Machine Age, or the First Pop Age, as well.

Might we operate a similar parallax today, and do unto Banham, Hamilton and colleagues what they did unto the modernists? That is, if the IG detected a shift in conditions from the Machine Age, might we trace a similar displacement vis-à-vis the Pop moment? As we frame our questions of Pop—concerning the phenomenology of the screened image, the formation of the subject in a mediated world, the representability of technologies that often appear immaterial—might we also refine our questions about art, architecture and design today? No doubt if we pursue this line of inquiry, related mistakes in self-understanding will be made: if the Pop moment showed the Machine Age to be charmed by an instrumental reason, and we see the Pop moment as taken over by a media euphoria, what might our dominant ideology be revealed to be? Or are we still too suspicious of all such epic poems, all such period

¹ Alison and Peter Smithson, 'But Today We Collect Ads', *Art*, no. 18, November 1956. On modern architecture and mass media see Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, Cambridge, MA 1994. This paper was written for a conference at Princeton University, 'Art, Architecture, and Film in the First Pop Age', 16 November 2002, and appears here as given then. It is also an *homage* to Richard Hamilton on the occasion of his retrospective in Barcelona and Cologne.

² Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, London 1960, p. II.

fictions, to permit these questions in the first place? (Obviously I am not; I think we default on cultural narratives at great cost—one counted in, among other ways, the slack relativism of much contemporary art and the indifferent thematicism of much exhibition practice.)³

2

If Banham is to be our model of revisionism, we need to know more about his project. First and foremost, he is committed to modern architecture, but again not to the canon of Gropius, Corbusier and Mies laid down by Pevsner, Giedion, Hitchcock and others. Banham challenges this edited version of modernism, however, according to *its own* criterion of how best to express the Machine Age (he too scorns all historical revivalism, including, later, the postmodern version). According to Banham, Gropius and company imitate only the superficial image of the machine, not its energistic principles: they mistake the simple forms and smooth surfaces of the machine for the dynamic operation of technology. This vision is too 'selective'; it is also too orderly—a 'classical' aesthetic dressed up in the guise of the machine. Corbusier all but confesses this classicism-through-the-machine when he juxtaposes a 1921 Delage sports car with the Parthenon in his *Vers une architecture* (1923). For Banham this is absurd: cars are Futurist 'vehicles of desire', not Platonic type-objects, and only a subject who thrills to the machine as 'a source of personal fulfilment and gratification' can embody its spirit.⁴

In this regard Banham the Pop prophet is not so at odds with Banham the revisionary modernist. Like others in the IG, he is raised on the popular culture of American comics and movies before the war; this is what 'Pop' means after the war as well, not folk in the old sense or Pop in the current sense: the former no longer exists for them, the latter does not yet exist for anyone. The IG is near enough to this American culture to know it well, but far away enough to desire it still, especially in an austere Britain short on attractive alternatives (the lofty civilization of Kenneth Clark, the mealy modernism of Herbert Read, the worker folk world of Richard Hoggart). The result is that the IG doesn't question this culture much: hence the apparent paradox of a group that is pro-Left and pro-American at once. At this time a second, consumerist Americanism

³ See Franco Moretti, 'MoMA 2000: The Capitulation', NLR 4, July–August 2000.

⁴ Reyner Banham, 'Vehicles of Desire', *Art*, no. 1, 1 September 1955, p. 3. Also see Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future*, Cambridge, MA 2002.

supplants the first, Fordist Americanism that swept through Europe in the 1920s—an Americanism of imagistic impact, sexy packaging, speedy turnover. These become the design criteria of the Pop Age for Banham, and they lead him to celebrate the ‘plug-in’ architecture of Cedric Price and Archigram in the 1960s.

His revision of modern architecture is thus not only academic; it is also a way to reclaim an ‘aesthetic of expendability’, first proposed in Futurism, for the Pop Age, where ‘standards hitched to permanency’ are no longer relevant.⁵ In this experiment Banham has two laboratories: the IG, both its discussions and its exhibitions, and his prolific essays where he applies to commercial products the iconographic methods that he learns for high culture at the Courtauld Institute. More than any other figure, Banham leads design theory away from a modernist concern with abstract forms to a Pop semiotics of cultural images, in a way that follows the shift from the architect as arbiter of machine production to the stylist as instigator of consumerist desire. ‘The foundation stone of the previous intellectual structure of Design Theory has crumbled,’ Banham writes in 1961, ‘there is no longer universal acceptance of Architecture as the universal analogy of design.’⁶ In this scheme the Book doesn’t kill Architecture; the chrome fender and the plastic gizmo do. In different ways the Smithsons and Price and Archigram take ‘the measure of this intervention’ in architecture; Hamilton does the same in painting.

3

Hamilton shares many of the Pop-Futurist enthusiasms of Banham. He too sees the machine as exemplary by dint not of its functional ‘fitness’ but of its fantasmatic power, its mythic force. In his introduction to ‘Man, Machine and Motion’ of 1955, a gridded display of over 200 images of mechanomorphs under sea, on land, in the sky and in outer space, Hamilton even recycles the old Marinetti trope of a man-machine ‘centaur’ from the first Manifesto of Futurism.⁷ Yet his archive of images is largely

⁵ Banham, ‘Vehicles of Desire’.

⁶ Banham, ‘Design by Choice’, *The Architectural Review* 130, July 1961, p. 44. Whiteley is again instructive on this point.

⁷ Richard Hamilton, *Collected Words 1953–82*, London 1982, p. 19; hereafter abbreviated cw. The Hamilton literature is large and various; I have benefited most from the texts in the 1992 Tate Gallery catalogue and in the special issue of *October* 94, devoted to the Independent Group, especially Julian Myers, ‘The Future as Fetish’, and William R. Kaizen, ‘Richard Hamilton’s Tabular Image’.

obsolete, his mechanical centaurs are almost campy, and this cannot but render the techno-futurism on offer here somewhat absurd. Never as 'gonzo' as Banham, Hamilton practises an 'ironism of affirmation' toward Pop culture (he borrows the phrase from his mentor Duchamp) or, in his own words, a 'peculiar mixture of reverence and cynicism'.⁸

In 'This is Tomorrow' of 1956 Hamilton is grouped with John Voelcker and John McHale, and 'ironism of affirmation' is again in play. His team decides that new kinds of 'imagery and perception' require new strategies of representation, and Hamilton constructs his little collage, *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?*, to the first end—to tabulate the emergent Pop iconography of 'Man, Woman, Humanity, History, Food, Newspapers, Cinema, TV, Telephone, Comics (picture information), Words (textual information), Tape recording (aural information), Cars, Domestic appliances, Space.' Although indebted to Paolozzi's 'Bunk', *Just what is it?* initiates his distinctive version of the Pop image, a space of pumped or primped figures, commodity images and media emblems that, in his own description, is 'tabular as well as pictorial'.⁹

Two months later, in a January 1957 letter to the Smithsons, Hamilton sums up IG research to date: 'technological imagery' (explored in 'Man, Machine and Motion'), 'automobile styling' (discussed by Banham), 'ad images' (credited to Paolozzi, McHale and the Smithsons), 'Pop attitudes in industrial design' (exemplified by the House of the Future of the Smithsons), and 'the Pop Art/Technology background' (the entire IG, 'This is Tomorrow').¹⁰ These interests will inform his tabular pictures to come, in particular a suite of three, *Hommage à Chrysler Corp.* (1957), *Hers is a lush situation* (1958), and *She* (1958–61). I want to review them briefly now—to come to terms with this type of picture and to speculate about some of its implications.

4

Hommage à Chrysler Corp. begins his intrigue with the automobile as core commodity and design-object of the 20th century (that is, until the PC), and for Hamilton it is more metamorphic 'vehicle of desire' à la Banham than Platonic type-object à la Corbusier. 'It adopts its symbols

⁸ CW, p. 78.

⁹ CW, p. 24.

¹⁰ CW, p. 28.



Richard Hamilton, *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?*, 1956

from many fields and contributes to the stylistic language of all consumer goods', he writes in 1962. 'It is presented to us by the ad-man in a rounded picture of urban living: a dream world, but the dream is deep and true—the collective desire of a culture translated into an image of fulfilment. Can it be assimilated into the fine art consciousness?'¹¹ *Hommage* is his first attempt to meet this IG mandate, and here his ironism of affirmation is not paradoxical, for Hamilton is so affirmative of automobile imaging at mid-century, so mimetic of its moves, that he is led to ironize its fetishistic logic: that is, to expose the break-up of each body on display—the new Chrysler in the foreground and the vestigial

¹¹ CW, p. 35.



Richard Hamilton, *Homage to Chrysler Corp.*, 1957

showgirl behind it—into *sexy* details whose production is obscure. Not only does Hamilton associate the body parts of each by analogy (the breast, say, with the headlight), but in so doing he demonstrates a conflation of commodity fetishism with sexual fetishism, as the two bodies exchange properties, even parts (à la Marx) in a way that invests them with erotic force (à la Freud). Perhaps this conflation of fetishisms is historically new to this moment: though foreseen in Surrealism, it is only foregrounded in Pop, which acts out this super-fetishism in ways that are excessive but demonstrative.

Signal characteristics of the tabular picture are already apparent in *Hommage*. First, the composition is, in his own words, 'a compilation of themes derived from the glossies'—several images for the car, the woman, and the showroom each.²² Fragmented, the body of the car is also rotated for display (this happens to female figures in other pictures like *She*, as if the skill of Old Master drawing had become a technique of semi-pornographic surveying). I read the headlight and bumper as the front, the fin and fender as the rear. Fetishistically specific (like Banham, Hamilton is a detail buff: 'pieces are taken from Chrysler's Plymouth and Imperial ads; there is some General Motors material and a bit of Pontiac'), these parts are also smoothened into near abstraction: if the woman caresses the car in the painting, so too does Hamilton caress its image in paint. The woman is also reduced to charged parts within a curvaceous outline, to breast and lips, which Freud counted among 'the secondary sexual characteristics'—here represented by an 'Exquisite Form Bra' and the pout of one 'Volupta', a star of a late-night American TV show of the time. This is representation as fetishization, an almost campy version of what Benjamin called 'the sex appeal of the inorganic'.²³ Such is the fetishistic chiasmus of this tabulation—a car is (like) a female body, a body is (like) a car—and the two commingle in this chiasmus as if naturally. (This is also borne out by the sexist lingo of the day: 'nice chassis', 'great headlights', and so on.)

Everything here is already mediated for display. 'The main motif, the vehicle, breaks down into an anthology of presentation techniques', Hamilton tells us, and he does highlight in paint the print versions of glossy colour and shiny chrome, all previously screened by the lens, as if

²² CW, p. 31.

²³ Walter Benjamin, 'Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century' (1935), in *The Arcades Project*, Cambridge, MA 1999, p. 8.

there were no other mode of appearance. Space is also thus transformed: it has become display-space *tout court*, here a showroom based on 'the International Style represented by a token suggestion of Mondrian and Saarinen'.¹⁴ Foucault remarks that with Manet the art museum becomes the frame of painting, and Benjamin that its primary value becomes exhibition value; with Hamilton this frame is more purely one of exhibition—the showroom—and exhibition value is pushed toward consumption value.¹⁵

Hamilton also speaks elliptically of 'a quotation from Marcel Duchamp', whose Green Box of notes for *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (*The Large Glass*, 1915–23) already obsesses him at the time of *Hommage* (he publishes his typographic translation of the Green Box in 1960). Perhaps he has in mind another note that speaks of 'the interrogation of the shop window' and 'the coition through the glass pane'.¹⁶ If so, this interrogation is now the enticement of the showroom where not only have traditional line, colour and modeling become means of product display, but aspects of modernist art and architecture—'Mondrian and Saarinen', diagrammatic signs and geometric bands—have also become devices of commercial exhibition. (This is another distinctive insight of Pop artists like Roy Lichtenstein, who shows us modernism mediated through comics.) Or perhaps the allusion to Duchamp is more general—that, like the *Large Glass*, this conjunction of Chrysler and showgirl is a kind of Bachelor Machine. But which is the bachelor and which the bride? Unlike Duchamp, Hamilton lets the two meet; the shop window is dissolved, desire is transformed.

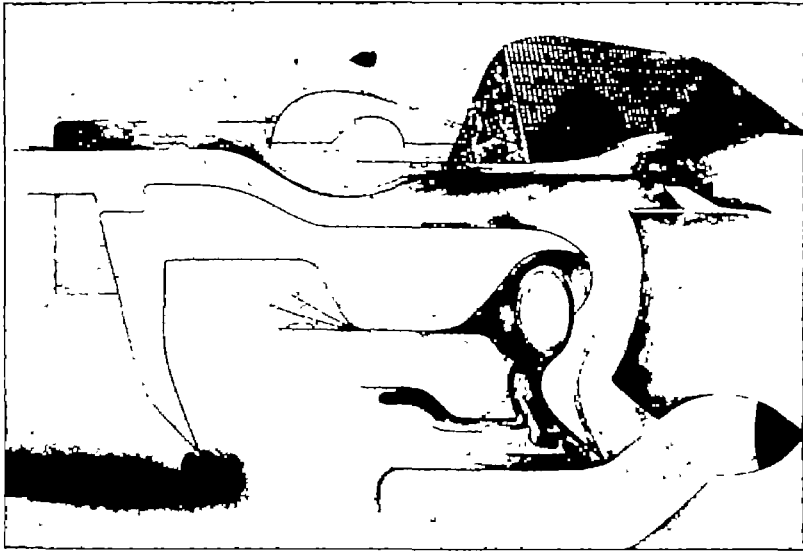
5

In his next tabular picture, *Hers is a lush situation* (1958), Hamilton pushes the association of body parts of car and woman beyond formal

¹⁴ CW, p. 32.

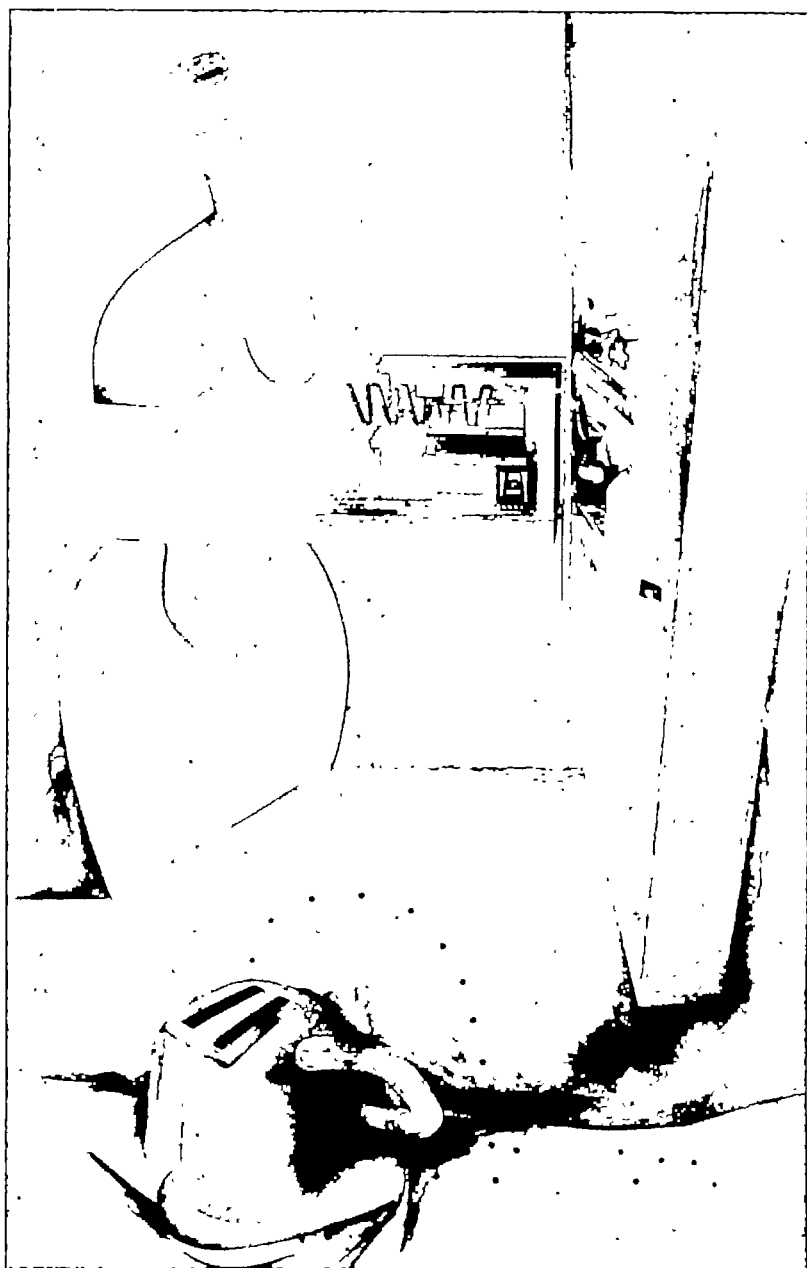
¹⁵ Michel Foucault, 'Fantasia of the Library' (1967), in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Ithaca 1977, p. 92. Benjamin writes of 'exhibition value', of course, in the *Artwork Essay*, and alludes to 'consumption value' in other notes.

¹⁶ Marcel Duchamp, *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, London 1975, p. 74. 'When one undergoes the examination of the shop window, one also pronounces one's own sentence. In fact, one's choice is "round trip" . . . No obstinacy, ad absurdum, of hiding the coition through a glass pane with one or many objects of the shop window. The penalty consists in cutting the pane and in feeling regret as soon as possession is consummated. QED.'

Richard Hamilton, *Hers is a lush situation*, 1958

analogy to actual commingling: the lines of bumper, headlight, fin, windshield, and wheel become one with the curves of the implicit driver. Another tabulation of images from the glossies, the painting is generated from a line in an *Industrial Design* review of a recent Buick: 'The driver sits at the dead calm center of all this motion: hers is a lush situation'.¹⁷ Perhaps this is the next stage in his Pop evolution of the Bachelor Machine, one that brings Hamilton into the Bataille orbit of Hans Bellmer: *Hers is a lush situation* as a graphic updating of *Machine Gunneress in a State of Grace* (1937), where Bellmer renders woman and weapon one. But what is still perverse, even obscene in Bellmer has become somehow normative, almost beautiful here: a lush situation, not a surreal threat. Although Hamilton worked to assimilate design into 'fine art consciousness', here the flow is in the opposite direction, and it is far along: the genre of the Odalisque is subsumed in an ad for a Buick (all that remains of the nude, as with the Cheshire cat, is her smile); or, better, a De Kooning drawing is not erased by Rauschenberg but reworked by an automobile stylist. In the process, line, which is still individual and expressive in De Kooning, a medium of contact between artist and model (or nature), appears for all its lushness almost engineered and statistical: 'line' becomes 'the right line' for 'the new line' of

¹⁷ CW, p. 32.



Richard Hamilton, *She*, 1958-61

Buick—a suturing device between ad-man and consumer. And if line is revalued here, so is plasticity, in a way that makes animation and reification difficult to distinguish. This old Futurist dream, which first came true in fascist culture, comes true again, in a different way, in consumerist culture. ‘More than a substance, plastic is the very idea of its infinite transformation’, Barthes writes in *Mythologies* just a year or two before *Hers is a lush situation* is painted—‘the whole world *can* be plasticized, and even life itself . . .’¹⁸

6

‘Sex is everywhere,’ Hamilton writes in 1962, ‘symbolized in the glamour of mass-produced luxury—the interplay of fleshy plastic and smooth, fleshier metal’.¹⁹ This erotic plasticity is not only fetishistic, a matter of charged details, but also sublimatory, a matter of abstractive displacements—it is as if Hamilton tracks the desirous eye in its saccadic jumps across associated forms. Together these two operations, fetishistic detailing and sublimatory sliding, inform the hybrid space of his tabular pictures—at once specific and sketchy in content, broken and seamless in facture, collagist and painterly in medium.

This combination is also at work in *She* (1958–61), his tabular summa, which Hamilton describes as another ‘sieved reflection of the ad-man’s paraphrase of the consumer’s dream’.²⁰ If the magazine image of a Chrysler provides the layout of *Hommage*, here it is a shot of a Frigidaire—apparently there is no end of the showroom, not even (especially not) at home. Hamilton lists no less than ten sources, all credited to particular designers and brands, for the fridge, the woman, and the hybrid of toaster and vacuum cleaner below: like Banham he is a mad iconographer of Pop representations of everyday life—that is, in this case, of domestic work. Like *Hommage*, *She* exploits the advertising genre of the woman-wife caressing the vehicle-appliance, yet here it is the commodity that seems to offer the human for sale (this is also signalled by the dollar-sign in the title). Once more the woman is reduced to an erotic ‘essence’, not breast and lips as in *Hommage*, but eye and hips. As in *Hers is a lush situation*, the hips are in whitened relief, while the eye is a plastic one taped into position: like painting, relief and collage are exploited for fetishistic effect, not the opposite. The eye opens and closes like the fridge,

¹⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957), New York 1972, p. 99.

¹⁹ *CW*, p. 36.

²⁰ *CW*, p. 36.

turns on and off like the toaster. Apparently in the Pop world of animated things it is not only sardine cans that look back at us; and far from a threat as in Lacan, this gaze is a winking come-on.²¹

7

Maybe now I can spell out, however telegraphically, a few implications of the tabular picture. To start with the word (Hamilton is as particular about terms as he is about images), 'tabular' derives from *tabula*, Latin for table, but also for writing-tablet, in which, in ancient use, both painting and printing figure as modes of inscription. Surely this association appeals to Hamilton, who uses both techniques in his own practice in large part because he finds them, already so imbricated, in the media. 'Tabular' also invokes writing, which Hamilton involves through his generative lists and descriptive titles; moreover, his pictures register the traces of the visual-verbal hybrid characteristic of the magazine spread or the tabloid layout (perhaps 'tabular' connotes 'tabloid' as well), a hybrid that anticipates the visual-verbal sign (call it a bit or a bite) that dominates electronic media space today, an often lush image that carries an often insistent directive ('click here', 'buy this', 'don't worry be happy').²²

Again, some of his pictures are tabular in another sense: generated by a table of terms, as with *Just what is it?*; or of images, as in *Hommage* and *\$he*; or of journalistic jingles, as in *Hers is a lush situation* or *Towards a definitive statement on the coming trends in men's wear and accessories* (1962-3; the title derives from a *Playboy* review of male fashion). More directly, 'to tabulate' is 'to set down in a systematic form', and Hamilton is often concerned, as he says, with an 'overlapping of presentation styles and methods': styles and methods that are commercial (as in the various display techniques that he evokes); modernist (as in the various abstract signs that he cites); and modernist-turned-commercial. (The last is most suggestive: Pop receives the 'reconciliation' of avant-garde and mass as given.) In his own words, 'photograph becomes diagram, diagram flows into text', and all is transformed by painting. At the same time he wants 'the plastic entities [to] retain their identity as tokens', and so uses 'different plastic dialects', such as photography,

²¹ I refer to the famous anecdote in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1973), New York 1981.

²² See T. J. Clark, 'Modernism, Postmodernism, and Steam', *October* 100, Winter 2002. Early on Hamilton calls this hybrid 'a poster' *cw*, p. 104.



Richard Hamilton, *Towards a definitive statement on the coming trends in men's wear and accessories (d)*, 1963

relief, collage, 'within the unified whole' of painting.²³ Like an ad-man, then, Hamilton tabulates—as in correlates—different media and messages, and tabulates—as in calculates—this correlation in terms of visual appeal and psychological effect.

In Pop it is not often clear when this redoubling is analytical and when it is charmed; this is especially so in Hamilton. Yet one thing seems clear enough: his pastiche (which is not a negative term for him) is not disruptively random, as it is, say, in many collages of Berlin Dada. Another insight of Pop—or 'Son of Dada' as Hamilton calls it—is that 'randomizing' has become a feature of the media, print and otherwise; a logic within the repertoire of the culture industry.²⁴ Sometimes he pushes this logic of the random to a demonstrative extreme. At other times his tabular pictures are logical in another sense, that is, almost

²³ CW, p. 38.

²⁴ As William Turnbull recalls in 1983: 'Magazines were an incredible way of randomizing one's thinking (one thing the Independent Group was interested in was breaking down logical thinking)—food on one page, pyramids in the desert on the next, a good-looking girl on the next; they were like collages'; in David Robbins, ed., *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, Cambridge, MA 1989, p. 21.

typological, as in the suite of images *Towards a definitive statement on the coming trends* . . . Hamilton describes them as a 'preliminary investigation into specific concepts of masculinity', here typified by President Kennedy, a Wall Street broker *cum* football player, a weightlifter *cum* track athlete, and astronaut John Glenn, each shown wired to a particular mechanism of sport, entertainment or media—that is, to a spectacle-device.³⁵ Perhaps more than any of his images, these recall the mediated collages of Rauschenberg; yet the tabular picture should not be confused with the 'flat-bed picture plane' of his American contemporary (as Leo Steinberg named it in 'Other Criteria').³⁶ Both are 'horizontal' operations, it is true, maybe in the practical sense of how they are assembled in the studio, sometimes tabulated on the floor, certainly in the cultural sense that they both scan across 'the fine/pop art continuum'.³⁷ Nevertheless, as Hamilton states as early as *Just what is it?*, the tabular image is also *pictorial*: for all its horizontal tabulation of semi-found images, it remains a vertical picture of a semi-illusionistic space—even though this orientation is associated with the magazine layout or the media screen as much as the painting rectangle; Benjamin once called it 'the dictatorial perpendicular'.³⁸ The tabular picture is also iconographic in a way that Rauschenberg is not (despite the attempts of art historians to track his sources as if he were Hieronymus Bosch); and in keeping with the IG, let alone the design industry, it is also communicative, almost pedagogical—again as Rauschenberg is not. The tabular picture is also more a research model than an 'anomic archive' as suggested

³⁵ CW, p. 46.

³⁶ Included in Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, New York 1972. In this shift to the horizontal site of cultural images Steinberg saw a break with traditional paradigms of the window and the mirror as well as the modernist model of the abstract surface, all oriented to the vertical and still associated with the natural—a break that he termed 'postmodernist'.

³⁷ This is a term advanced by Lawrence Alloway in 'The Long Front of Culture', *Cambridge Opinion*, no. 17, 1959, and adopted by Hamilton.

³⁸ See Walter Benjamin, 'One-Way Street' (1928), in *Selected Writings Volume 1*, Cambridge, MA 1996, p. 456. Benjamin writes here of script: 'If centuries ago it began gradually to lie down, passing from the upright inscription to the manuscript resting on sloping desks before finally taking itself to bed in the printed book, it now begins just as slowly to rise again from the ground. The newspaper is read more in the vertical than in the horizontal plane, while film and advertisement force the printed word entirely into the dictatorial perpendicular.' I recall this term here to complicate the overvaluation, in much contemporary art and criticism, of the horizontal and the base—as if they could somehow overwhelm the dictatorial perpendicular on their own.

with regard to Gerhard Richter.²⁹ There is no American or European equivalent that I know.

8

In the age of mechanical reproduction, Benjamin once remarked, 'literacy' must include the decoding of captioned photographs.³⁰ Additionally in the Pop age, Hamilton suggests, it must entail a deconstructing of the mediated image-word bite that hails us from magazines, billboards, television, and now computers too. This 'literacy' is fundamental to postwar self-fashioning, which has to do far less with any canon of art and literature than with a host of media-apparitions and commodity-signs. (The recent Canon Wars in the academy obscured the fact that the primary canon today consists of television shows, blockbuster movies, sports trivia, celebrity gossip.) Suggestively, the word 'tabular' refers not only to graphic inscription; in ancient use it also connotes 'a body of laws inscribed on a tablet'. Might these tabular pictures be construed as pedagogical investigations of a 'new body of laws', a new subjective inscription, a new symbolic order, of Pop society?

Hamilton is self-aware about the preconditions of this new order (if that is what it is). As an artist he is committed to nature, but knows that it is 'second-hand': 'In the 50s we became aware of the possibility of seeing the whole world, at once, through the great visual matrix that surrounds us; a synthetic, "instant" view. Cinema, television, magazines, newspapers immersed the artist in a total environment and this new visual ambience was photographic'. He is also committed to the figure—his *Collected Words* ends with this statement: 'I have never made a painting which does not show an intense awareness of the human figure'—but knows that it too is transformed, not only rearticulated by machines and confused with commodities (this is not news) but also now designed-and-redesigned as an image-product.³¹

Consumer society, Hamilton writes in 'Persuading Image', a paper first delivered in 1959, depends on the manufacturing of desire through design, on an artificial, accelerated obsolescence of image, form and

²⁹ See Benjamin Buchloh, 'Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*: The Anomic Archive', *October* 88, Spring 1999.

³⁰ See Walter Benjamin, 'A Little History of Photography' (1931), in *Selected Writings Volume 2*, Cambridge, MA 1999.

³¹ *CW*, pp. 64, 269.

style. In the process (which he assumes, not critically but also not moralistically) the consumer is also 'manufactured', designed to the product. 'Is it *me*?', he remarks of the commodities in *She*, miming the ad-man miming the buyer: 'the appliance is "designed with you in mind"'.³³ It is this condition that his tabular pictures work over: not only the fetishistic conflation of different objects and aims, but also the interpellation of the subject in the image, as an image. Today this process has become internal to the subject, who serves as designer and designed in one, a kind of servomechanism of consummated consumption. When Hamilton turns to his version of the great Pop icon in *My Marilyn* (1965), he adapts, in painting, a negative sheet from a photo shoot with her own editorial marks: which images to cut (she is merciless), where to crop—in short, how to look, to appear, *to be*. His Marilyn is still a star, but less as an erotic object than as a model designer, as the master artist of her own powerful iconicity. How different, perhaps more pointed, than the anxiety of a de Kooning or the thralldom of a Warhol.³⁴

9

Just as the product is in excess of function, Hamilton suggests in 'Persuading Image', so demand is in excess of need. In effect he sketches a consumerist formula of Demand minus Need equals Desire that is not too distant from the formula of desire that Lacan also develops in the 1950s.³⁵ Lacanians will scorn this speculation, but might his definition of desire be historically grounded as well, a theory of desire inflected by consumerism? Certainly the tabular pictures seem to share the Lacanian sense of desire as a metonymic slippage, at once fetishistic and sublimatory, from image to image, a refinding of the same object in ever new guises. Again, they seem to (re)trace the saccadic jumps of the scopophilic subject.

Thus the tabular picture not only anthologizes 'presentation techniques', it also mimes the distracted attention of the desirous viewer-consumer. In this light its painterly subsumption of photography, relief and collage seems warranted not regressive—regressive, say, in relation to a transgressive standard of Dada (about which Hamilton is sceptical in any

³³ CW, p. 36.

³⁴ On this iconicity see my 'Death in America', in Annette Michelson, ed., *Warhol*, Cambridge, MA 2001; and on consumerist interpellation see my *Design and Crime (and other diatribes)*, London 2002.

³⁵ See, for example, 'The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud' (1957), in *Écrits*, New York 1977.

Richard Hamilton, *My Marilyn*, 1965

case, especially when it comes to readings of Duchamp). Again, he assumes the fetishistic effects of painting (condemned long ago by the Russian Constructivists), not to mention of other devices, both modernist (relief and collage) and commercial (the magazine layout). He recognizes that all these forms are now reworked in the image of a general fetishism (commodity, sexual and semiotic), and he moves to exploit this new order—which is one of semblance as well as of exchange—and, in so doing, sometimes to deconstruct it too.³⁵ Painting allows for the requisite mixing not only of charged details with blended anatomies, but also of the optical jumpiness of the subject with the erotic smoothness of the object; it is this unresolved combination that makes his early paintings both pull apart and hold together.

How does this effect jibe with traditional painting; that is, how does the tabular relate to the tableau? 'In the mainstream of Western painting (since the Greeks, anyway),' Hamilton writes in 1970, 'it has been

³⁵ On semiotic fetishism see Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, St. Louis 1973.

taken for granted that a painting is to be experienced as a totality seen and understood all at once before its components are examined'. 'Some twentieth-century artists questioned this premise', he adds, with the heteroglossic pictures of Klee and the proto-tabular *Large Glass* of Duchamp in mind.³⁶ Clearly Hamilton is affined with this minor line. Yet by his own time the dominant line of the tableau—which runs perhaps from the Greeks, as he says, but certainly from Renaissance perspective through the neoclassical tableau to modernist painting as defined by Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried; that is, painting 'as a totality seen and understood all at once'—has crossed with his own genealogy. The tableau and the tabular can no longer be held apart as distinctive forms. In 'Other Criteria' Steinberg argues that, for all its claim to autonomy, late-modernist abstraction (e.g., the stripe paintings of Kenneth Noland and Frank Stella) appears driven by a logic of design, in fact by the very logic of Detroit styling so admired by Banham and Hamilton: imagistic impact, fast lines, speedy turnover. In other words, he suggests that an ironic identity is forged, under the historical pressure of consumer society, between modernist painting and its other, whether this other is called 'kitsch' (Greenberg), 'theatricality' (Fried), or 'design'.

In this regard what Greenberg and Fried theorize as a 'strictly optical' space of pure painting, Hamilton pictures as a strictly scopophilic space of pure design; and what Greenberg and Fried theorize as a modernist subject, fully autonomous and 'morally alert', Hamilton projects as its apparent opposite, a fetishistic subject openly desirous.³⁷ This is another Pop insight that Hamilton shares with Lichtenstein in particular: that today, in both compositional order and subjective effect, there is often no great difference between a good comic or ad and a grand painting. Importantly, however, this demonstration of the decay of a totality unique to painting is made within painting (perhaps only there is it fully articulate). Paradoxically, then, this demonstration sustains painting even as it shows painting to be deconstructed, within and without, by historical forces. In 1865 Baudelaire writes to Manet, in an ambiguous compliment, that he is the first in the 'decrepitude' of his art.³⁸ Over one hundred years later (and counting) Hamilton carries this fine tradition of popular decrepitude along.

³⁶ CW, p. 104.

³⁷ See especially Michael Fried, 'Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella' (1965), in *Art and Objecthood*, Chicago 1998.

³⁸ Charles Baudelaire, *Correspondance*, Paris 1973, vol. 2, p. 497.

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REVIEWS

Martin Beck Matušítk, *Jürgen Habermas: A Philosophical-Political Profile*
Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, MD 2001, \$29.95, paperback
384 pp, 0 7425 0797 1

GOPAL BALAKRISHNAN

OVERCOMING EMANCIPATION

Jürgen Habermas is the only contemporary philosopher whose *œuvre* could withstand comparison to the encyclopaedic accomplishments of German Idealism. To all appearances, the ambition of the early Frankfurt School to transform this philosophical legacy into a social theory that would negotiate between the projects of Marx, Weber and Freud seems to have not only been realized, but exceeded in scale: the tradition of Horkheimer and Adorno now embraces a vast array of post-war agendas in linguistics, normative political philosophy, international relations, child psychology and bioethics. Running through this ongoing synthetic enterprise is a spirit of public engagement that has informed numerous highly visible interventions into the political debates of the Federal Republic of Germany, from the 1950s to the present. Habermas is arguably a unique case in intellectual history—a philosopher for whom *esprit de système* has rarely precluded deft adjustments to the prevailing trends.

Martin Beck Matušítk's profile offers the first critical overview of his entire career as a public intellectual in any language. A former Fulbright student of Habermas, Matušítk approaches his subject with an appealing combination of enormous respect and shrewd scepticism. The design of this biography is an unconventional present-tense narrative that scans the same life in three registers: an excavation of the political unconscious of the first

post-war generation of young adults, indelibly marked by the German catastrophe; a meticulous story of topical evolution unfolding through successive conjunctures; and a more uneven account tracking the turning points in the development of Habermas's conception of critical social theory. Matušítk reconstructs the stream of his political interventions as a sequence of existential encounters with the decisive moments of post-war politics and of flawed translations of theory into practice. Written in an unpretentious, if somewhat over-italicized style, this portrait effectively captures the formative episodes of a figure who has persistently sought to define the boundaries of responsible opposition.

Born in Dusseldorf in 1929, Habermas was raised in the small town of Gummersbach, the son of a modestly affluent, politically conformist merchant, who—it is one of Matušítk's revelations—was a member of the Nazi Party from 1 May 1933 to the fall of Berlin in 1945. His son passed through the Third Reich without incident, briefly serving in the Hitler Youth near the end of the war. Catastrophic defeat—subsequently rendered as liberation—was the defining experience of his generation. The disclosures of the Nuremberg trials cast an eerie retrospective light on the normality of everyday life in this milieu. In interviews Habermas has described the early post-war years of occupation, re-education and tutelary democracy as a time of unrealistic hopes for a clean break from a suspicious, if still largely unexamined, national past. Before the dawning of the Cold War, Sartre, Mann, Kafka and even Brecht had begun to shape the outlook of a generational cohort that would strike periodic notes of cautious dissent in the restorationist atmosphere of the 50s. Habermas began a dissertation on Schelling under the influence of Heidegger, a looming presence in the intellectual landscape of the early Federal Republic. A sheltering silence still concealed the Nazi careers of many leading academics, including Habermas's own mentors at Göttingen, Erich Rothacker and Oskar Becker. Heidegger's decision to republish a text from the mid-30s sombrelly referring, in passing, to the 'inner truth and greatness' of National Socialism (now rendered as 'the movement'), and his subsequent refusal to recant, elicited an anguished response from a now deeply disillusioned young admirer.

A change of orientation immediately ensued: while finishing his dissertation Habermas began to read seriously the Young Hegelians, early Marx and the Lukács of *History and Class Consciousness*. This experience opened his horizons to the intellectual world of the émigrés. The Nazi regime had effectively removed Marx and Freud from German culture; after the war they could initially seem like exotic fossils from another age. Personal contact with Marcuse was the initial point of entry into the orbit of the newly re-established Frankfurt school. The return of Horkheimer and Adorno to Frankfurt was part of the wider post-war restoration of sociology, a discipline

which in short time revealed a familiar field of contrasts between schools of a more philosophical bent and those championing value-free social science. Habermas remembers that reading *Dialectic of Enlightenment* allowed him to appreciate for the first time the contemporary relevance of Marx—a rather surprising claim in that Marx, let alone the class struggle or socialism, features hardly at all in this work. To Horkheimer's alarm, Habermas also began to recover buried treasures from the archives of the pre-war Institute. But in sharp contrast to his elders, he was simultaneously attuned to the imported wares of logical positivism, empirical social psychology and pragmatism. Tensions between Horkheimer and Habermas began to rise, not over these new-found interests, but rather as a result of the younger thinker's first attempts to develop a critical theory that might inform a politics of opposition. Horkheimer, living in dread of fascist recidivism, saw no alternative to the American-guaranteed order in West Germany, and took umbrage at Habermas's participation in the campaign for nuclear disarmament. While punctually discussing this conflict, Matušík does not explore the longer-term influence of Horkheimer and Adorno on Habermas as examples of political conduct. But Habermas's subsequent stance towards radical activism can be read as an unspoken tribute to their enduring authority, a relationship Matušík's generational account tends to obscure.

Horkheimer's politically motivated rejection of the research that would become Habermas's dissertation, the groundwork for *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, prompted its author's departure from Frankfurt to Marburg, to work under Wolfgang Abendroth, at that time one of the Federal Republic's few Marxist professors. Published in 1962, today this work enjoys an international reception that has firmly established its reputation as a masterpiece of historical sociology. But though now probably the best-known of his writings, it has a strange status in contemporary estimations of Habermas's thought, recalling an earlier, more radical vocation for critical theory. At its centre is an ideal-type representation of the early modern 'public sphere'—a bourgeois milieu of coffee houses, salons, debating clubs, grub street publishing and learned correspondence, which formed the communicative infrastructure of the Enlightenment in France and England. After tracking the gradual decline of this multi-national Republic of Letters into the depths of twentieth-century mass media and manipulated public opinion, Habermas held out the remote prospect of an Enlightenment to come, in which a critical democracy might not merely reverse the degeneration of liberal traditions, but develop a more egalitarian order beyond them.

As a stark sketch of the historical conditions of possibility for a cultural revolution in the advanced capitalist West, this text remains in many ways unsurpassed. Matušík's study of Habermas's trajectory could profitably

have taken more of its bearings from this doctoral opus, since it provides one of the few instances in his career where a political practice can be judged by a theoretical prognosis. Certainly, it is significant that Habermas, once he started to be published in English, seems for many years to have discouraged its translation, much in the spirit of Horkheimer's attitude to his own pre-war writings. For in Germany, its appearance in the early sixties electrified radical students, becoming a key reference for the SDS after its expulsion from the ranks of the SPD. It was not long after the completion of this work that Habermas's academic fortunes began to soar. With Adorno's support, he returned to Frankfurt in 1964 as a professor of philosophy and sociology, occupying the position that Horkheimer had held. Successive levies of increasingly dissident students now came to view him as a critical supporter of their causes.

Marcuse was a more central catalyst in this ferment; his notions of 'repressive desublimation', 'one-dimensional man', and 'the great refusal' captured more vividly the confluence of anti-imperialism, US ghetto upheavals and the generational discontents of affluent capitalism. By contrast, Habermas's writings from this period were always more sceptical about any ready translation of the Frankfurt legacy into a living politics. His 1963 collection of essays *Theory and Practice* offered a genealogy of positivist conceptions of social science, which held that politics hinged on the selection of value-free means to attain rationally unjustifiable ultimate ends. Against such doctrines, Habermas floated the idea of a self-reflexive social theory capable of overcoming the relativism entrenched in the different areas of a fractured society by formulating criteria for an emancipatory politics, without raising dogmatic claims to an Archimedean, holistic perspective. A more systematic work later in the decade, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, sought to anchor the possibility of such a reflexive methodological orientation in a quasi-transcendental human interest in lightening the load of man-made hardship, above and beyond our natural finitude. Commitment to this interest, he claimed, forms the horizon within which social relations can be conceptualized as the opaque screen of systematically damaged forms of life. Psychoanalysis rather than Marxism provided the model for the indicated diagnostics.

Matušítk sees the leitmotif of this emerging project as a synthesis of the liberal-democratic reckoning of 1945 with the revolutionary aspirations of the 60s. When German students' increasingly militant anti-imperialism threatened to overstep the parameters of this mission, however, they were met with a hail of determined rebukes. From 1967 to 1969 the tense relationship between radical student groups and the elders of the Frankfurt School erupted into open hostilities. Matušítk re-creates a now legendary piece of political theatre in vivid detail. In 1967, within a few days of the kill-

ing of Benno Ohnesorg by the Berlin police during a demonstration against the Shah, Habermas stunned his admirers by denouncing a quite mild call by Rudi Dutschke for campus action as tantamount to 'left fascism'. The wildness of the charge sent shock waves through a non-violent, if raucous protest culture. Matušík observes that this imprecation, more than anything Habermas was to write, came to define his relation to those on his Left. A more measured, if equally caustic verdict was issued in 1969: the rebellion of the previous year, he claimed, had been a phantom revolution, leaving society untransformed, but thoroughly on edge. Identification with revolutionary struggles in the Third World was the illusory compensation for an inability to come to terms with the democratic immobility of advanced capitalist societies. Such were the bitter parting comments of Horkheimer's successor. Adorno's death brought the demoralization of the previous few years to a head, leading to the final break-up of the Frankfurt School, and Habermas's departure for the Max Planck Institute at Starnberg.

In 1969 the first post-war German government of the Left under Willy Brandt had come to power with the slogan: 'dare more democracy'. But the reformist programme of the Social-Democratic government soon collided with the world economic downturn that began in the early 70s, setting off what would eventually become a permanent chorus of conservative alarm at the insupportable burdens of the welfare state and the malaise of an overly reflexive, liberated society. While Matušík brings the cultural-revolutionary drama of 68 admirably to life, he fails to register the impact of this later material conjuncture on Habermas's conception of critical theory. For this is the moment when his scepticism towards the classical agenda of social emancipation became programmatic. Habermas spent most of this decade working on what is arguably his magnum opus, the two volumes of his *Theory of Communicative Action*, published in 1981. In it he exhibits a polymathic fluency in nearly every language of social theory from the late 18th century to the present. But whereas Marx and Freud had previously provided the major coordinates of his vision of a dialectic of enlightenment, here it is the systems theory of Talcott Parsons that discloses the architectonic shape of modernity, outlining more circumscribed boundaries for the rational critique of society. By not exploring its conclusions, Matušík fails to track the conservative drift in Habermas's theoretical outlook, as the civil restoration of 45 effectively eclipsed the Fronde of 68, now visible only as a luminous—or alternatively ominous—fringe of the *Grundgesetz*.

Resuscitating a venerable trope of sociology, modernization was now presented as the differentiation of society into separate spheres—administration, markets and a more fluid realm of communicative fellowship—each governed by distinct standards of performance. Culture, in this account, is divested of its traditional legitimating function as a comprehensive world

view, and is recast on a grid of specialization where science, law and art develop distinct, immanent norms of judgement. Habermas maintains that this autopoiesis of rationalization requires ongoing enlightenment in the nebula of the life-world, if the human face of modern society is to be preserved. Embedded in the performative conditions of human utterance is a normative expectation that consensus will arise out of unimpeded communication. This principle provides a vantage point for a critique of the vast, intricately intertwining operations of money, administration and technical expertise that tend to thwart such unforced agreement. As opposed to a critique of political economy, focusing on the exploitation or emancipation of reified labour-power, the norm of undistorted communication traces the only realistic horizon of improvement in advanced societies. But a politics informed by it must stay within the limits set by the impersonal orders of bureaucracy and money, as any attempt to overstep them in upsurges of would-be self-determination can only cancel the achievements of social rationalization. The remote prospect of a radical assertion of popular sovereignty that Habermas held out in *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* has been definitively retracted. The salvageable core of a politics of emancipation is no more than a civilized balance between money, power and solidarity.

Habermas offered, however, no optimistic gloss for liberal-democratic capitalism. Although a constitutional welfare state energized by protest politics coming from alternative lifestyles is presented as the final form of social rationalization, *Theory of Communicative Action* ends with the bleak observation that capitalist crisis had effectively checked the forward march of this process, and was setting in motion trends that now threatened to reverse post-war advances through a long, demoralizing attrition. This disconcerting conclusion, in which the severity of the predicament is aggravated by the impossibility of any concerted political solution, recapitulates the uneasiness the late Hegel felt before a modernity that had failed to settle into its purportedly comprehended, architectonic form. But in Habermas's case it is not the tremors of popular sovereignty that disturb the stately edifice of objective reason, but the attenuation of what has come to stand in for them.

Meanwhile another, more ominous phantom revolution was threatening civil peace in Germany. While Habermas was still writing these tomes at the Max Planck Institute, the Federal Republic was rocked by a series of spectacular assassinations of prominent politicians and businessmen, carried out by underground cells of the Red Army Faction. The political reaction that had failed to materialize in the aftermath of 68 now went into full swing. Yellow journalism, academic black lists, loyalty oaths and prison deaths recalled states of emergency from other times. Matušík explores Habermas's courageous response to the Hot Autumn of 77, when he stood his ground before

counter-terrorist panic, while defending the Frankfurt School from accusations that it had planted the seeds of violence in the previous decade.

Confounding expectations of a long era of Social Democratic ascendancy, a Centre-Right coalition came to power in 1982 with the defection of the FDP under Genscher to the side of the CDU. Christian Democratic rule would demonstrate a more solid grasp of the organic formulas of government in the decade of the Second Cold War. Habermas's return to Frankfurt in 1982 coincided with massive protests against the Kohl government's welcome for the installation of Pershing missiles by the US. Habermas saw in the ensuing campaign of civil disobedience a healthy manifestation of resistance from the life-world to unaccountable power and—overcoming previous inhibitions—defended its compatibility with the authentic spirit of the Basic Law. Despite these expressions of sympathy, he did not question West Germany's allegiance to NATO. Matušítk passes over Habermas's tense relationship with the newly formed Green Party, a political formation drawing on the still intact sub-cultures of 68. The philosopher sternly reprimanded the early Greens for their 'lunatic' antics in the Bundestag, 'irresponsible' anti-Americanism and nostalgic vision of a divided nation, trapped between nuclear power blocs.

Matušítk offers instead a detailed account of Habermas's battles with a resurgent neo-conservatism, which he feared might reverse the Federal Republic's fraught passage into the comity of Western culture. The prospect of Reagan and Kohl commemorating the casualties of the Second World War before SS graves at Bitburg raised the spectre of an unsettling revisionism in which Germany's role in the post-war Alliance could be represented as a continuation of its wartime efforts on the Eastern Front. Just this implication was developed in the historian Ernst Nolte's incendiary thesis that Nazism in Germany should be seen as a pathological response of bourgeois society to the annihilating threat of the Red Terror in Russia—and as such calling for potentially more empathetic comprehension. The Historians' Debate that broke out in 1986 around this, and other attempts to offer an allegedly more balanced retrospective judgement on the historic predicaments of the German Reich, captured international attention, as Habermas weighed in to attack the suggestion that there was anything salvageable in this geopolitical legacy. Intermingled with his powerful rebuttals, however, was a curt dismissal of any attempt to revive the anachronistic agenda of national reunification. The like-minded Hans-Ulrich Wehler complained that conservative nostalgia for such unity did more to endanger the Federal Republic's allegiance to the West than even the foolish prattle of the Greens. Habermas declared that the only viable form of collective identity that remained for the Federal Republic was a constitutional patriotism, voided of all retro-nationalist vestiges.

While no one could foresee that within three years the GDR would be erased from the map, Habermas's blindness to the division of the country compared poorly with the record of others on the Left less fixated on Bonn, and more sensitive to historical realities likely to outlast the Cold War. It is greatly to his credit that when in 1990 reunification came, Habermas argued against immediate *Anschluss* of the East, calling instead for a new constitutional settlement to be approved by a referendum in both parts of the country, in accordance with Article 15 of the *Grundgesetz*. But the force of his appeal was weakened by his prior failure—in common with virtually the whole left-liberal mainstream in the West, which uncritically celebrated 1945 as a year of Allied deliverance—to respond with any imagination to the consequences of post-war partition.

Not long after, anti-immigrant pogroms erupted in old and new *Länder* alike, and the Basic Law's generous asylum provisions, an émigré legacy of the post-war settlement, came under broad attack. Here too Habermas spoke up with commendable clarity and vigour against the dangers of incipient racism, expressing his long-standing commitment to a vision of political order grounded in humanitarian norms. German reunification could be reconciled to these, he argued, only with an unequivocal disavowal of any intention to flex new muscles in Europe, and a determination to pursue ever-greater integration into the EC. Developing the conception of a post-national democracy, he warned that return to the old capital in the Berlin Republic encouraged a complacent verdict that normal nationhood had at last been attained. At the very moment when world history had slated the nation for down-sizing, neo-conservative nostalgia was muddying the waters of cultural understanding, deferring a mature engagement with the times.

In such interventions—over Bitburg, the Historians' Debate, Reunification, the Asylum Law—Habermas has played the role of a vigilant intellectual guardian, alerting the public to the omnipresent dangers of political amnesia. It is a balance-sheet Matušík understandably honours. But it cannot be separated so easily from the side of Habermas that came to disturb him. For it was in this capacity too that Habermas, in an extraordinary display of indifference to historical accuracy that took even close friends on the liberal Left aback, hailed Daniel Goldhagen's grotesque distillation of modern German national identity prior to occupation into a psychotic anti-Semitism. The trashiness of this American best-seller was apparently less important to him than its serviceability as political grist to his mill. Spectres from a haunted past, always threatening to return, could be exorcized only through abjuring forever the temptation to become an autonomous state. Self-dissolution into a European—and eventually world—federation is a way of working off this debt to other countries, which can set their own timetables for entering into the post-national age. Matušík is reluctant to challenge Habermas's lofty

perch in the watchtower of the nation's conscience, but it is from just this position that an anachronistic anti-Fascism would pass judgement on the fate of Belgrade and Baghdad.

For this was the moment at which Matušítk entered Habermas's circle in Frankfurt, an experience that left an indelible impression on him. Despite his respect for the philosopher, he could not follow him in endorsing America's wars in the Gulf and the Balkans. Most painful of all, in this association with 'cluster-bomb liberals', was the glaring contrast between Habermas's intemperate denunciation of the unarmed student protests of 68 and his complaisance towards the raining down of high-tech military violence by the most powerful state machine in the world—'his fear of student street activism and revolutionary aspirations' on the one hand, and his 'support for extreme levels of the state monopoly of violence and killing', on the other. The passion of Matušítk's reproaches is all the more impressive for the sincerity of his attachment to Habermas. Nor can he shut his eyes to other signs of adherence to the Atlantic status quo. Commenting on *Between Facts and Norms*, he writes:

The need for economic democracy exists in Habermas's theory neither as a theoretical nor a practical possibility. Existing capital, labour and investment markets are left undisputed: they are designed for efficiency by the market economists and utilized by entrepreneurs since efficiency cannot be translated into the language of social justice and vice versa . . . In sum, capitalism and democracy are not a contradiction, since there is nothing undemocratic about efficiency and nothing economic about democracy.

These are criticisms of an admirer whose good faith is beyond question. They are prompted by a conviction that Habermas—the living embodiment of critical theory, in Matušítk's view—has in such cases failed to understand the political logic of his own theoretical project. But if one accepts the premise that its origin lay in a deep-going attempt to bring to light the hidden potentials for emancipation in the present, it is more reasonable to conclude that Habermas has now abandoned this agenda for another. The problem today is how to universalize and institutionally anchor the norms of liberal-democratic civilization with due regard to the diversity of human cultures, ultimately grounded in the symbolic remnants of world religions. In the light of this contemporary preoccupation, the classical conception of popular sovereignty as the constituent power of a self-determining society can be rejected as a primitive national metaphysics. Archaic fantasies of collective emancipation—Habermas has explained he no longer uses the term—are being superseded by a nascent geopolitics of human rights.

According to this prospectus, a clear view of the horizon of modernity can emerge only when we abandon the figment of a sovereign people as a collec-

tive subject for a proceduralist constitutionalism, rooted in inter-subjective rules of unforced mutual agreement. Misgivings that such consensus might still be an artefact of some opaque impersonal coercion are now relegated to the occasional aside. The new Habermas is an essentially establishment philosopher, with little taste for the hermeneutics of suspicion. The task of criticism is simply to clarify the intuitions underlying the existing constitutional dispensation, blocking the path to any regressive majoritarianism. Where older theories of democracy mistakenly conceived of individual rights as checks on the will of a hypostasized collective subject, Habermas argues that a radical democracy must on the contrary conceive such rights as the necessary condition for the formation of a true consensus; though why this is more radical, and not less, is not itself explained. Historically, those who denounced radical democracy—fearing the coercive power of sovereign multitudes to dissolve property rights and introduce a more sweeping equality—have with good reason identified it with the former, not the latter conception.

For Habermas, by contrast, modern constitutions are open to their own supersession, not by any insurgency arising out of the depths of an endangered life-world, but through governments dissolving the jurisdiction of their own states into an overarching, cosmopolitan legal order. Europe is the first stop for Germany, supposedly en route to a world federation. This passage, we are reminded, is fraught with risk, as the trend lines of globalization are extremely difficult to extrapolate. A mood of 'enlightened helplessness' is rampant on the mainstream Left, but that is unwarranted in Habermas's view, because as solidarities of national welfare *Gemeinschaft* dry up, new ones are emerging in the milieu of a multi-cultural *Gesellschaft*. Habermas offers his revised understanding of democracy as a guideline for managing the ensuing ethno-religious frictions in a society of strangers. But the rhetoric of multi-culturalism also provides a convenient idiom for a certain way of disposing of the legacies of colonialism. He writes in *The Inclusion of the Other*:

Eurocentrism and the hegemony of Western culture are in the last analysis catchwords for a struggle for recognition at an international level. The Gulf War made us aware of this. Under the shadow of colonial history that is still vivid in people's minds, the allied intervention was regarded by religiously motivated masses and secularized intellectuals alike as a failure to respect the identity and autonomy of the Islamic-Arabic world. The historical relationship between the Occident and the Orient, and especially the First, to the former Third World, continues to bear the marks of a denial of recognition.

The turn towards discourse ethics allows a curtain of mystifying euphemism to be drawn across the enormity of contemporary imperialism.

But what calculations of real forces lie behind Habermas's redefinition of democracy? In the twenty years since the publication of *Theory of Communicative Action* the power of capital has taken a Great Leap Forward. Habermas concedes that this development threatens to negate the formula of modernity as a balance between money, power and solidarity. Unleashed, uncomprehended money appears to be cancelling the autonomy of the state, and overwhelming one outpost of the life-world after another. Do we now move from Talcott Parsons back to Karl Marx? Not at all. For the time being, there is no political solution to our predicament. Certainly no nationalist closure or secession from the world market can be considered, but seen in the light of 20th century attempts to exercise this option, that is nothing to regret. For according to Habermas modernity is precisely this process of periodic 'expansion' of the life-world through waves of creative destruction. We stand in the midst of another Great Transformation, and like the one that unfolded from the mid-19th century to the Belle Époque, it is reshaping the social order through the unregulated agency of money so rapidly that only those riding in the fiery chariots of world finance have the wind in their banners.

But this Polanyian account inevitably leads to an unsettling parallel that Habermas chooses not to draw. For in this reckoning, the first era of globalization led to the horrors of world war and fascism before the Bretton Woods order neutralized the volatility of world capitalism. Habermas argues that the defining moment of the 20th century was not the defeat of Communism but rather the vanquishing of Fascism, as this is what made possible the democratic welfare state and decolonization—the two decisive advances of post-war history. But he does not consider, in turn, whether the end of the Cold War, whose significance is reduced to a second instalment of victory over totalitarianism, has set into motion a trend in the opposite direction—towards a new form of laissez-faire imperialism. Following the Polanyian narrative one could conclude that we are once again heading to the brink of catastrophe.

The horizon of this second era of globalization seems dark but Habermas implies that we can see this process through to another era of social regulation without an intervening time of catastrophes. The danger is that this Great Transformation, even more than the first, seems to be uprooting the solidarities needed for a future democratic response. Where is the refuge of optimism on this blighted landscape of inequality and atomization? The unstated premise that follows is paradoxical: the decline of older communities of fate is precisely what makes possible two major advances in the rationalization process—the euthanasia of nationalism in the lands of its origin, and an irreversible, ongoing feminization of society. For the German historian Lutz Niethammer this bizarre juxtaposition of progressive and regressive developments forms the distinguishing pattern of an age of

identity politics—a world all too liable to break apart in Hobbesian culture wars. Habermas appears to be more sanguine. But if multi-culturalism and feminism will not suffice to stave off catastrophic meltdowns and nationalist backlashes outside of the OECD zone, what is the force that will hold the world together in the coming time of transition?

Habermas is counting on the rationalization of inter-state relations going into high gear. Unlike the first half of the twentieth century, the second reveals a trend, in his view, towards the pacification of inter-state relations. First, completely breaking with historic precedent, all the developed capitalist countries became liberal democracies, locked into an American-dominated security framework that has made war between them unthinkable. Second, the collapse of the Soviet empire has eliminated, for the time being, the threat of nuclear war that previously hung over this internal rationalization of Western state and society. For Habermas the post-Cold War era offers the prospect that Kant's vision of historical progress towards a world federation is finally on the agenda. In this perspective, open season on rogue states is a spring-cleaning of the historical debris left over from the era of nationalism.

Throughout the 90s Habermas developed this conception of a new world order crystallizing around humanitarian norms, undaunted by the cavalier legalities and collateral damage of neo-imperial warfare. The historical experience of the last half-century, he has suggested, affords a revision of the essential premises of Kant's sketch of the unfolding of international law within the world of war, commerce and diplomacy. According to Kant, state power would be compelled by an emerging European-wide sphere of public opinion firstly to conform to constitutional limitations, then to renounce war against other constitutional states and, finally, to leap into irrevocable federation with them. Kant steadfastly opposed the idea that any one state could ever be entrusted to establish this condition on its own terms. The result, Habermas observes, is that 'he must rely exclusively on each government's own moral self-obligation. But such trust is scarcely reconcilable with Kant's soberly realistic description of the politics of his own time.'

What has changed in the world since Kant's time that now warrants a less soberly realistic description of international affairs? Habermas claims that in the era of globalization, "soft power" displaces "hard power" and robs the subjects to whom Kant's association of free states was tailored of the very basis of their independence'. As a result, a global 'civil society' that provides the political setting for a human-rights agenda has emerged. Even a world media domain divided between multinational giants and postmodern robber barons offers episodic coverage of human-rights violations, famines and other calamities of interest. Habermas seems to think that had Kant lived to see the beginning of the Second American Century, he might also

have thrown caution to the winds and embraced a republican empire with the power to vault over the threshold of sovereign statehood and establish a new kind of world polity.

While Habermas expressed the hope that this process would unfold within the framework of a reformed United Nations, it was clear from the establishment of the Anglo-American no-fly zones over Iraq, and certainly from the time of the Rambouillet diktat, that the outlines of another world order were emerging, reducing the General Assembly to absolute irrelevance, and the Security Council to the undignified role of providing, when solicited, legal cover for the sovereign decisions of the White House. Habermas, like many on the European Left, has difficulty perceiving the United Nations as it is. But in a time of transition between old and new inter-state regimes, his normative political theory can perform an essential ideological function. It offers a method for bridging the interpretive no-man's-land between the increasingly defunct norms of the Charter and the imputed ideal structure of obligations under a supposedly nascent international law—that is to say, a legal order that has yet to come into being, but whose humanitarian norms can be invoked by the most powerful state in the world to authorize any departure from the Charter framework. The incipient soft norms of human rights turn out to require an emergency regime of hard steel and high explosives to come into being.

Confronted with current US assertions of America's eternal supremacy, as the Pentagon gears up to seize Baghdad, Habermas has not been moved to revise his confidence in the West's new *mission civilisatrice*. While expressing conventional European misgivings about the dangers of 'unilateralism', he has deplored Schroeder's declaration that Germany would not join an invasion of Iraq, even were the Security Council to mandate one, as failing to display 'unreserved respect for the authority of the UN'. The more loyal attitude of Foreign Minister Fischer—a favourite of both the State Department and the philosopher—was preferable. For Habermas, once again, the decisive question is the *language* to be used in justifying the latest state of exception, as if this is what determines the final architecture of world politics. Here is the distinction with which (in a recent *Nation* interview) he garlanded motives for the Balkan War:

In Continental Europe, proponents of intervention took pains to shore up rather weak arguments from international law by pointing out that the action was intended to promote what they saw as the transition from a soft international law toward a fully implemented human rights regime, whereas both US and British advocates remained in their tradition of liberal nationalism. They did not appeal to 'principles' of a future cosmopolitan order but were satisfied to enforce their demand for international recognition of what they perceived to be the universalistic force of their own national 'values'.

The shell game of principles versus values defines the parameters of the only debate that the later Habermas considers worthwhile. Conversations with Rawls and Rorty—'the heirs of Jefferson'—boil down to justifying the writ of liberal democracy in different idioms. Acknowledgment that 'the idea of a just and peaceful cosmopolitan order lacks any historical and philosophical support' does not deter Habermas from concluding that there is no alternative to striving for its realization, even if its military expressions, for all their good will, so far leave something to be desired. The suspicion that such wishful thinking might preclude historical and philosophical comprehension of the real world has been successfully kept at bay. Habermas recently wrote of Herbert Marcuse that he believed he had to introduce a vocabulary that could only open eyes clouded to realities that had grown invisible 'by bathing apparently unfamiliar phenomena in a harsh counter-light'. But reconstructing this forgotten language, and learning how to speak it, is the sole vocation of a theory that is genuinely critical.

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BENJAMIN MARKOVITS

BISEXUAL BYRON

'Temperate I am, yet never had a temper,' Byron wrote in the unfinished seventeenth canto of *Don Juan*, whose fragments he took with him on his final expedition to Greece in 1823:

Modest I am, though with some slight assurance,
 Changeable too, yet somehow idem semper,
 Patient, though not enamoured of endurance
 Cheerful, but sometimes rather apt to whimper,
 Mild, but at times a sort of Hercules *furens*,
 So that I almost think that the same skin
 For one without has two or three within.

The picture is both strangely boastful and disarmingly self-mocking, the complacent self-assessment of a man confident in the interest with which others assess him. He puzzled himself, sometimes happily, sometimes less so, and left his life 'a problem, like all things' to his future biographers, who have portrayed him in almost as great variety as he portrayed himself. Most of these versions are more or less familiar, and more or less incompatible with each other: the melancholy misanthrope, the people's champion, the arrogant peer, the man of action, the play-soldier, the fool of women, the bane of women, the gay icon, the Romantic, the anti-Romantic. He wrote of his own journal: 'If I am sincere with myself (but I fear one lies more to oneself than to any one else), every page should confute, refute, and utterly abjure its predecessor.'

Biographers probably set out with a similar intention, though their accounts tend to shade towards one or other of the modest 'two or three within' that Byron himself recognized. Fiona MacCarthy's new *Life* picks out

three features in particular for special treatment: Byron's carefully nurtured celebrity, his thwarted homosexuality, and his political engagement. The last two are perhaps slightly more controversial. Byron's politics have sometimes been dismissed as ineffectual and insincere, sometimes championed as heroic and revolutionary. His sexuality has come under increasing scrutiny since British censorship laws were relaxed in the 1960s. MacCarthy's account is generally fair, though she tries to undermine Byron's heterosexual passions, sometimes to the detriment of her biography; her sexual argument is curiously connected to the political, however, and the overall effect is striking.

George Gordon Byron was born in London in 1788 to Catherine Gordon, a young Scottish heiress who had more money than sense, and 'Mad Jack' Byron, a handsome captain embarking on his second marriage, who had neither. He was raised, a surprisingly ordinary, plump and Scottish child, in Aberdeen till he was ten, when the death of his great-uncle William, the fifth Lord Byron, passed the title to George. Whereupon he shifted with his mother to the family estate at Newstead, near Nottingham, and slowly began to move up in the world: went to Harrow at thirteen and Cambridge at seventeen; toured the continent with his friend Hobhouse for two years in 1809, returned alone, made his maiden speech in the House of Lords, published his account of the trip, *Childe Harold*, and awoke famous; was lionized and frequently loved; began an affair with Augusta Leigh, his half-sister from their father's previous marriage; married, partly to avoid the scandal, in 1815; separated a year later, after which, harried by creditors and rumours of incest and sodomy, he set off for the continent again, where he would die, famously, fighting for Greek independence, at the age of thirty-six.

For MacCarthy it is 'Byron's Napoleonism, his active involvement in political events of his own day and age' that distinguishes him most sharply from the English Romantic poets that were his contemporaries. The claim demands a host of qualifications. The Lakers began their careers as revolutionaries and utopians, although in later life they more or less retired to their Lakes (metaphorically, that is: watery, sinecured, or opiate). Wordsworth never published his strongest political protest, the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*, and would have 'refuted and abjured' it many times over before he died; he did play a later part in local politics—electioneering for the Tories in Westmorland. Shelley has generally been considered the most radical of the English Romantics. He was sent down from Oxford for his postures on atheism; spoke in Dublin on the Irish question; pamphleteered on topics ranging from vegetarianism to human rights; and wrote a series of what have become classic political and poetical revolutionary texts, from *A Philosophical View of Reform* to the rousing 'Song for the Men of England'. But most of these remained unpublished in his lifetime—owing in part to

his unwillingness to leave Italy for England, where he might have faced imprisonment for his sedition.

MacCarthy's argument requires that Byron's 'active political involvement' belonged to a different class of protest, although the background is somewhat scanted in her account. As a boy he had read histories of 'most of the countries of Europe' as well as Rome and Ancient Greece; at the time of the Battle of Trafalgar he kept a bust of Napoleon in his room at Harrow. But it was his time in Spain, where he travelled with Hobhouse during the insurgency of the Peninsular War, that seemed to have formed Byron's anti-imperial outlook and national-independence sympathies. It was an important part of the education that, later on in the tour, he turned to write about in the first Canto of *Childe Harold*—denounced by the *Antijacobin Review* as 'the rant of democracy in its wildest form'. The Spanish rebellion brought out the ambivalence of his views on Bonaparte:

Can despots compass aught that hails their sway?
Or call with truth one span of earth their own
Save that wherein at last they crumble bone by bone?

Nevertheless, unlike Shelley, he was always more likely to talk of individuals, despots or liberators, than abstractions like suffrage and human rights: 'To be the first man—not the Dictator—not the Sulla, but the Washington or the Aristides—the leader in talent and truth—is next to Divinity!'

Byron had thought once, and his master at Harrow had believed, that he would prove an orator rather than a poet. His maiden speech in the House of Lords in 1812, not long after his return from Spain, was a rather apocalyptic defence of the Nottingham stocking-weavers against legislation that would make their frame-breaking a capital crime:

How will you carry the bill into effect? Can you commit a whole country to their own prisons? Will you erect a gibbet in every field to hang up men like scarecrows? Or will you proceed (as you must to bring this measure into effect) by decimation, place the country under martial law, depopulate & lay waste all around you, & restore Sherwood Forest as an acceptable gift to the crown in its former condition of a royal chace & an asylum for Outlaws?

Such moments offer biographers a choice of sympathies. For the most part, MacCarthy inclines towards the view taken by Lord Holland, that Byron's parliamentary intentions were sound, but rather furious: 'His speech was full of fancy, wit and invective, but not exempt from affectation nor well reasoned, nor at all suited to our common notions of Parliamentary eloquence.' Byron himself testified at the time: 'I spoke very violent sentences with a sort of modest impudence, abused every thing & every body, & put the Ld. Chancellor very much out of humour' (the line curiously suggests

Shelley's account of his own youthful revolutionary extravagance, *Queen Mab*, in which he versified 'against Jesus Christ, & God the Father, & the King, & the Bishops, & Marriage, & the Devil knows what'). But he soon had enough of such 'mummeries': 'my parliamentary schemes are not much to my taste—I spoke twice last Session—and was told it was well enough—but I hate the thing altogether—and have no intention to "strut another hour" on that stage'.

Of course, Byron possessed the kind of pride that might prick him to several contradictions before he confessed to failure. Besides which, *Childe Harold* appeared a week after his maiden speech; Byron discovered that he played the poet rather better than the orator. He lacked the party feeling and the attachment to theoretical consistency of his friend Hobhouse, whose career in the Commons went a lot further than his cleverer companion's in the Lords. In general, Byron came down on the side of inconsistency: 'when a man talks of system, his case is hopeless'. He was well aware of the contradictions his natural perversity might lead him into. He declared in 1814:

I have simplified my politics into an utter detestation of all existing governments; and, as it is the shortest and most agreeable and summary feeling imaginable, the first moment of an universal republic would convert me into an advocate for single and uncontradicted despotism. The fact is, riches are power, and poverty is slavery all over the earth, and one sort of establishment is no better, nor worse, for a people than another.

In 1816 the rumours—of incest and sodomy—that attended his separation from Augusta persuaded him to flee the country. In Italy, and then in Greece, he rediscovered, to a certain extent, a more positive politics, and his actions as usual belie his own 'simplification'. He was moved partly by a personal sympathy for the oppressed, but his engagement presumed at least a struggling faith in national and cultural identity—the kind of 'system' he elsewhere suspected. MacCarthy describes in lively though local detail his day-to-day involvement with the underground Carbonari group in Ravenna—whose internal bickering increasingly frustrated Byron, though their Neapolitan confrères succeeded in wringing at least the promise of a constitution from King Ferdinand in 1820—and with the squabbling and rebellious Greek independence factions. She emphasizes his patience rather than the *hercules furens*; and brings out above all what Disraeli called his 'strong, shrewd commonsense—his pure, unalloyed sagacity', particularly in what she characterizes as his noble, more fatal than futile, intervention in the Greek cause. He played his part, chiefly as a negotiator, with great aplomb and practical humility: 'if my presence can really be of any help at all in reconciling two or more parties, I am ready to go anywhere, either as a mediator, or, if necessary, as a hostage'. MacCarthy presents the mar-

tial dressing-up he indulged in for his Greek entrance, 'a splendid scarlet coat with gold epaulettes', as less silly than canny. 'His appearance was not just magnificent theatre, though Byron certainly found his transformation into *deus ex machina* amusing: it was making an important connection in the public mind between Byron and military glory.' This is another moment when the biographer gets to pick her Byron: the choice of 'amusing', rather than flattering, say, signals her determination not to make him into a fool.

Byron's cast of mind allowed him to be more liberal in his associations than the squeamish republican Shelley, whom Marx had called 'the true revolutionary of the famous pair'. It was Shelley who had complained that:

Italian women are perhaps the most contemptible of all who exist under the moon; the most ignorant, the most disgusting, the most bigoted, the most filthy. Countesses smell so of garlick that an ordinary Englishman cannot approach them. Well, LB is familiar with the lowest sort of these women, the people his gondolieri pick up in the streets.

Byron's sexual orientation is the second aspect of the 'life and legend' that MacCarthy brings to the fore. Erotic excitement can be a means of piquing a more general curiosity, and Byron claimed that his broad experience in that field equipped him to write his masterpiece. In a letter from Venice to his friend and agent Doug Kinnaird he asked:

As to 'Don Juan'—confess—confess—you dog—and be candid—that it is the sublime of *that there* sort of writing—it may be bawdy—but is it not good English?—It may be profligate—but is it not *life*, is it not *the thing*?—Could any man have written it—who has not lived in the world?—and tooled in a post-chaise? in a hackney coach? in a Gondola? against a wall? in a court carriage? in a *vis a vis*?—on a table?—and under it?

MacCarthy is right to place such an emphasis on his sexuality. It matters; Byron makes it matter. Promiscuous experience was what distinguished him from Wordsworth and Keats, whom he accused of 'a sort of mental masturbation—he is always f—g—g—g his *Imagination*'. MacCarthy wishes to reverse Doris Langley Moore's argument that 'Byron's love affairs with women were his main emotional focus, his relations with boys being no more than diversions'; she believes the opposite is true. But the Don Juan list sounds more straight than gay, set as it is for the most part in the social world—coaches, gondolas—in which women famously threw themselves at him. In spite of her best endeavours, MacCarthy can find no real evidence of active homosexuality during Byron's stay in Venice, beyond the fact that Tita, his devoted servant, may have been sexually 'up for sale' to Byron's gay friend William Bankes, and that Byron himself referred to Venice as 'sea-Sodom'.

There are reasons for supposing that Byron would have censored his own list. Douglas Kinnaird was not one of Byron's 'Methodist' friends, the slang term for homosexual in their Cambridge set. And Byron had written from Venice, not Greece or Turkey. MacCarthy claims that Byron's letters from this period were specifically designed to assuage his friends' fear of his homosexual tendencies: 'There is something suspiciously insistent about the bravado of Byron's narratives of his encounters with women in letters back to England, which in effect were public bulletins'. But the argument cuts both ways. Quitting England in 1816, he might have satisfied his 'repressed' homosexual desires as freely as he had on his first continental tour in 1809, to the occasional disgust, and consistent anxiety, of Hobhouse. Yet he stopped in Venice, and passed the time with Italian peasant women, before he fell in love with Teresa Guiccioli, the well-bred Italian convent girl, whose affections occupied him more or less for the rest of his life; until his unrequited passion for the Greek boy Lukas Chalandritsanos, the inspiration for his final beautiful verses.

MacCarthy is not the first biographer to point out Byron's interest in boys and men; she mentions the influence both of Langley's book and Louis Crompton's account of *Byron and Greek Love*, published in 1985. Harold Bloom called Byron 'basically homosexual' in his 1973 anthology of *Romantic Poetry and Prose*; but Crompton argues that 'this is a mistake in the other direction'. MacCarthy writes that Leslie Marchand himself, Byron's great biographer, whom she thanks for the encouragement he gave her before his death, would have addressed his homosexuality more fully if the laws of the time had permitted it. A close look, however, at Marchand's later *Portrait*, a condensed version of his 1957 three-volume biography, brought up to date by subsequent discoveries and adapted to the change in legislation, reveals that Byron has retained his heterosexual ardour. Marchand has added to, rather than shifted from, his earlier account. Crompton's book argues quite simply that Byron was bisexual: 'Byron's heterosexual impulses were fully as real as his homosexual ones and, if we take his life as a whole, more persistent and significant though (apart from his incest with his sister) less dramatically threatening'.

MacCarthy's insistent qualifications take the wind from Byron's heterosexual passions: in the case of women, it was only, say, a page's costume that attracted him, or the intrigue; and in any case his interest faded after a week, or three months, or three years. Yet the great charm of Byron's work lies in the gustiness of all his varying passions; it seems a shame to abate any of these. Should we not take him as he left himself, as inconsistent sexually as he was in everything else? MacCarthy almost acknowledges as much when she cites Byron's reply to his critic Francis Palgrave's charge that the style of *Don Juan* was uneven, lurching from grave to crudely comic:

Did he never play at Cricket or walk a mile in hot weather—did he never spill a dish of tea over his testicles in handing the cup to his charmer to the great shame of his nankeen breeches?—... did he never inject for a Gonorrhea?—or make water through an ulcerated Urethra? was he ever in a Turkish bath—that marble paradise of sherbet and sodomy?

The interrogation notably includes both heterosexual and homosexual soakings. MacCarthy sums up: 'a man who could not be scorched, then drenched, and who saw no point in such extremes of experience, was missing out on life'.

But in an important sense MacCarthy's emphasis restores some dignity to Byron, who has suffered heavily at the hands of 'mothering' writers such as Phyllis Grosskurth (her recent contribution is subtitled *The Flawed Angel*; subtitles seem a useful indication of the tone of Byron biographies and MacCarthy's *Life and Legend* is respectably sober). Such writers often treat Byron as an impulsive fool who never knew his own mind. The truth is rather that he knew it too well, and was aware of all its contradictions. His letters and journals offer a subtle and shifting, but not a self-deceiving portrait of the author. By interpreting his sexual inconstancy as the effect of thwarted homosexual desires, MacCarthy has presented an able and self-aware man struggling against a repressive society, rather than a foolish one simply indulging himself to everyone's cost. (Between 1800 and 1830 around sixty men, including many of high rank, were executed for sodomy in England.) His miserable year of marriage, from 1815 to 1816, illustrates the point. There is no doubt that Byron was cruel, his half-sister Augusta culpable, and his wife Annabella Milbanke deluded. But MacCarthy's picture of Byron's incestuous and homosexual longings, the fear these aroused in his confidantes—which, she argues, prompted such counsellors as Lady Melbourne to encourage his marriage to her virtuous niece in the first place—and the political use to which the knowledge of his illegal past was put by his wife's family during the separation, allow us to understand how things could have gone so wrong, without any of the actors in the drama being incorrigibly vicious or stupid.

Nevertheless, there is something enduringly unhappy about her image of Byron. If she is right, and Byron's homosexual relationships were the focus of his emotional life, romance dried up for him after he returned from his promiscuous tour of the Levant in 1812 and heard that John Edleston, the schoolboy chorister he had adored at Cambridge (chastely or otherwise), had died. The next twelve years, which included several lengthy heterosexual affairs—with his sister, Lady Oxford, Teresa Guiccioli—suddenly look barren, and his unrequited passion for the teenage Lukas Chalandritsanos

seems truly desperate. But as Marchand points out, Byron once asked Thomas Moore to

assure [the critic] Francis Jeffrey, who knew him only through his poetry, 'that I was not, and indeed, am not even now, the misanthropical and gloomy gentleman he takes me for, but a facetious companion, well to do with those with whom I am intimate, and as loquacious and laughing as if I were a much cleverer fellow'.

He was living in Venice at the time, and well-kept by a succession of fond and passionate women. His easily delighted and delightful powers of empathy suggest that his broad and sexualized appetite for human life was one of his great virtues. Douglas Dunn remarks, in his selection of Byron's verse, that 'his interests were directed at both sexes, with a capacity for devotion, tenderness and ruthlessness as well as an elevated quality of friendship—and these human qualities, virtues in spite of character, find their way into Byron's poems.' MacCarthy's biography portrays his good and bad points fairly: his great and impulsive generosity, his spite and miserliness, capacity for taking and giving offence, for making enemies and making up. His gift for love, both offered and received, was enormous. His bisexuality seems to be consistent with a broader split in his nature.

Byron's irruption into the imagination of Young Europe between 1825 and 1848 seems to have owed at least as much to his death at Missolonghi as to his work. In 1826 the Belgian artist Joseph-Denis Odevaere, who had trained with Jacques-Louis David in Paris, painted a spectacular neo-classical portrait of *The Death of Byron*. MacCarthy declares that 'the image of his corpse stirred the consciousness of the Western World' in a way not seen again until the death of Che Guevara. Mazzini hailed his death as 'the holy alliance of poetry with the cause of the peoples; the union—still so rare—of thought and action which alone completes the human Word'. In France, Hugo, Vigny and Lamartine immediately addressed him in self-identifying poems, Lamartine publishing his own *Childe Harold* sequel in 1825. (Byron himself had commented of Lamartine's 1820 'L'Hommage à Lord Byron', 'He calls me "*Esprit mystérieux, mortel, ange ou démon*", which I call very uncivil, for a well-bred Frenchman'.) Heine translated parts of *Manfred*, and Mickiewicz *The Gaiour*. Pushkin, exiled to Mikhailovskoe, ordered the village priest to hold a mass for 'the servant of God, the *boyar* Georgii'; his Decembrist friend Kondratii Ryleev carried a volume of Byron's poems to the scaffold.

In fact, the myth—and the personality behind it—have got in the way of Byron's critical appreciation from the moment the critics attacked his first volume, *Hours of Idleness* in 1807, by mocking the author's nobility. Matthew Arnold praised him in a similar fashion, by plucking the poet from

the poem: 'We talk of Byron's personality, a personality in eminence such as has never been yet, and is not likely to come again; and we say that by this personality Byron is "different from all the rest of English poets, and in the main greater."' And Pushkin complained, almost admiringly, that his single subject was himself. His poetry is mostly autobiographical, true; but Byron led a traveller's life and took pride in his engagement with the world, distinguishing himself from his fellow Romantics precisely in that respect. He would have passionately disputed Pushkin's assessment. *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold* are also accounts of early nineteenth-century Europe and the Near East, at least as much political reportage and travelogue as the record of a life; and Wordsworth could never have caught such a range of accents, from Russian queen to Cockney footpad, as Byron mimics in *Don Juan*. The fact is that his 'lover's quarrel' with the world was extraordinarily equal, owing to Byron's great celebrity—the scale of his curiosity about others was matched by their curiosity about him. To understand his work, both his world and his verse are needed: they hold the mirror up to each other. Since Eliot, poetry has been praised for its detachment and its timelessness, which does not mean that detached and timeless accounts are any truer than intimate and timely ones. MacCarthy, too, is more interested in the life than the literature; but her emphasis on Byron's 'strong, shrewd commonsense' and knowledge of the world re-unites him to the virtues of his work.

Boston Review's *Eleventh Annual*

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TONY WOOD

THE POET OF DECEMBRISM?

Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin became a literary figure of national importance at the age of 15, when Gavriil Derzhavin, the grand old man of Russian letters, listened in rapt attention as Pushkin read his composition for the junior examinations at the Tsarskoe Selo Lycée. Derzhavin proclaimed that the young man would assume his mantle, and St Petersburg's leading *littérateurs* immediately recognized his talent. 'The rascal will crush us all!' wrote Prince Petr Viazemskii, later a close friend of Pushkin. Throughout the rest of Pushkin's brief, turbulent life, both acclaim and criticism were freighted with a sense of national expectation; he was perceived by many to be not only Russia's most gifted writer, but also an embodiment of its literary destiny. The process of mythologization had begun even in his lifetime: in 1834 Nikolai Gogol described him as a 'unique manifestation of the Russian spirit', claiming that 'the countryside, soul, language and character of Russia are reflected in him with the purity and the spotless perfection with which a landscape is reflected through the convex surface of a lens.'

Gogol's choice of metaphor is revealing: Pushkin rapidly became a prism through which others could refract mythologies of their choice—most famously Dostoevsky, who claimed, at the unveiling of a monument to Pushkin in Moscow in 1880, that the poet embodied precisely that quality of 'universal responsiveness' that would enable Russia to redeem mankind through Christian brotherhood. Since the late nineteenth century, anniversaries of Pushkin's birth in 1799 and death in 1837 have been marked with great fanfare by Tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet regimes alike—and with corresponding distortions of the realities of his life and the meanings of his art. T. J. Binyon's handsomely produced and impressively detailed biography takes as its aim, 'in all humility, to free the complex and interesting

figure of Pushkin the man from the heroic simplicity of Pushkin the myth.' Binyon has undertaken several years of archival research, providing a wealth of intersecting documentary trails he follows with admirable forensic clarity. But Pushkin is portrayed here through the triangulation of people, events and circumstances, rather than by the evolution of his thought or attitudes; the result is a readable, scholarly work that firmly resists sentimental mystifications, but whose close attention to tangible facts and connexions can shed only a partial light on the complexities it describes.

Pushkin was born in Moscow on 26 May 1799, to parents from sharply contrasting backgrounds of which Pushkin was equally proud. His mother was descended from Abram Petrovich Gannibal, Peter the Great's black servant, and later an important figure at the Imperial court; he is usually referred to as Abyssinian in origin, but more recent scholarship suggests he may have come from the northeast of present-day Cameroon. The Pushkin family, by contrast, claimed descent from the old Muscovite nobility that had been, in Binyon's words, 'submerged in the influx of the newly ennobled' after the introduction of the Table of Ranks in 1722. The economic circumstances of both families were relatively straitened—Abram Gannibal had fallen from favour long before his death, and the Pushkins were, like declining gentry elsewhere, accustomed to a life now beyond their means. Throughout his life Pushkin was to retain a sense of infringed aristocratic pride, whose material corollary was a constant financial insecurity that was only to increase in later years.

An awkward, plump child, Pushkin enjoyed the love of neither of his parents, and was largely left to the care of his grandmother, Mariia Gannibal. The family moved apartments with unsettling frequency, but Pushkin's passion for reading remained constant: by the age of ten he had consumed Racine, Molière, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and was a devotee of Voltaire—writing a parody of the latter's *Henriade* at around the age of eight. He had also dipped into his uncle Vasili's collection of French erotica. It was perhaps as much his precocious knowledge of sexual matters as his acquaintance with French literature that earned him the nickname 'the Frenchman' at the Lycée in Tsarskoe Selo—Catherine the Great's former retreat fifteen miles south of St Petersburg; the town now bears the name Pushkin. The Lycée, which he attended from 1811 to 1817, and whose progressive curriculum aimed to suffuse the nation's elite youth with notions of civic rights and duties, furnished Pushkin with many lifelong friends—notably his future literary collaborator Anton Delvig; Konstantin Danzas, who was to act as his second in the duel that took his life; and the future Decembrists Wilhelm Küchelbecker and Ivan Pushchin. Pushkin floundered academically—he was generally towards the bottom of the class; his best subjects were Russian and French literature and fencing—but flourished poetically, producing

epigrams and quatrains 'almost without conscious thought'. Binyon relates how one pupil taken ill awoke to find four lines of rhymed verse scrawled on the wall above his bed. The impression is above all one of ceaseless, fervid energy, of a highly inventive mind 'more ardent and subtle than deep', in the words of one of Pushkin's school reports from 1812.

Pushkin arrived in St Petersburg in 1817 already *de facto* a member of the capital's literary set, thanks to poems published while still at the Lycée. He was nominally in the employ of the Foreign Ministry, but seems barely to have put in an appearance at the office. Instead, the next three years passed in a flurry of social and literary activity that Binyon evokes with obvious relish. In his parents' lodgings in the unfashionable St. Petersburg district of Kolomna—the family had moved from fire-ravaged Moscow in 1814—Pushkin led a dissipated life: his neighbour, Baron Korff, described him as representing 'a type of the filthiest depravity'. Although Pushkin's moral standards were not exceptional for a man of his age and social class, his thorough dedication to dissoluteness was more unusual. The frequent bouts of illness that resulted from his brothel visits did, however, at least give him plenty of time to read, and write. The mock-heroic epic *Ruslan i Liudmila* was written over several periods of convalescence in 1818–20, a good-humoured counterweight to Karamzin's eight-volume *History of the Russian State* (1818), which Pushkin devoured at this time. In his frock coat and top hat, with curly hair and unusually long fingernails, Pushkin also did his best to cut a dash in the *beau monde*, issuing challenges to duel at the slightest excuse and picking quarrels where he might flex his rapier wit. During an argument in a theatre, for instance, he announced he had only refrained from slapping his opponent because the actors might take it for applause. Rash gestures were one constant of Pushkin's behavioural repertoire, and seemed to stem from the same combination of restlessness and incaution that could be seen in his Lycée years. He was prone to abrupt changes of mood and enthusiasms, his volatility often overflowing into self-destructiveness. He was apt to lash out when frustrations accumulated, in Binyon's words 'caring little—on the contrary rather hoping—that he might, like Samson at Gaza, bring the whole edifice of his life crashing about him.'

Pushkin's youthful hot-headedness also found political expression in his poems of 1817–20, when his circle included several representatives of the progressive tendencies that arose in the aftermath of victory over Napoleon—notably the Turgenev brothers, Aleksandr and Nikolai, and the thinker Petr Chaadaev; Pushkin addressed a poem to the latter in 1818, ending with the words 'And on the ruins of autocracy/ Our names will be inscribed'. In 1817 Pushkin wrote a stirring assault on absolutism—'Tyrants of the world, tremble!'—entitled 'Liberty. An Ode', a poem of what Binyon calls 'talismanic significance' for the generation that was to form the core

of the Decembrist revolt in 1825. Pushkin's political sympathies at this time coincided with those of the empire's liberal youth—he supported the abolition of serfdom and advocated a monarchy bound by the rule of law, notions considered distinctly seditious by the authorities. His ribald verses and scurrilous epigrams were further proof of dangerous free-thinking, and Pushkin was deemed emblematic of an emergent threat to the autocratic order—his poems circulated widely in manuscript, and were known by heart even in the officer corps. Aleksandr I ordained that he be exiled to Siberia.

Luckily for Pushkin, his influential friends Zhukovskii and Viazemskii interceded on his behalf to mitigate the punishment. Exiled to Kishinev and then Odessa from 1820–24, Pushkin was supposed to be working for the administration of the Southern Territories. But unlike his contemporary Griboedov, who vigorously undertook a diplomatic career alongside his literary preoccupations (see NLR 14), Pushkin seems never to have stooped to the tasks of a functionary. In 1820, he made a lengthy detour to Kishinev via the Caucasus and the Crimea, and was inspired by the exoticism of the location to write works such as *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* and *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray*. The former owed a great deal to Chateaubriand's *Atala* and Byron's 'The Giaour' and 'The Corsair', which Pushkin read in French translation—although he did use a volume of Byron's poems as the textbook for his first efforts at learning English. *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* also included an epilogue glorifying the Russian conquest of the region, for which several of Pushkin's friends upbraided him; Viazemskii, for instance, was appalled: 'the hymns of a poet should never be eulogies of butchery', he wrote to Aleksandr Turgenev in 1822. But many among Russia's liberal youth greeted enthusiastically the empire's brutal southward expansion, conducted by General Aleksei Ermolov from 1816 to 1827. Pushkin's fulsome praise for the latter was unexceptional. As Binyon notes, however, there is a paradoxical contrast between Pushkin's approval of 'pacification' here and his support for Greek independence—a Byronic allegiance tempered by his disappointment with the leaders of the *Hetaireia* he met in Kishinev.

Exile to the shores of the Black Sea inevitably brought the fate of Ovid to Pushkin's mind. Gloom and bile recur—'Beneath the storms of harsh fate/ My flowering wreath has faded'—but the unprecedented 8 roubles a line he was paid for *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray* suggested that he might be able to make his living entirely from writing. The promise of material independence can only have increased his disdain for his bureaucratic post, and amplified the swagger with which he strode around Kishinev and Odessa. In Kishinev he began to write his novel in verse, *Evgenii Onegin*, whose opening chapters portray the social whirl of St Petersburg with sparkling wit and linguistic inventiveness, in 14-line stanzas with a rhyme-scheme adapted from the sonnet—reminiscent, in Nabokov's view, of passages in La Fontaine's

fables, but never consistently deployed as a form until Pushkin. Written between 1823 and 1831, *Evgenii Onegin* owes a great deal to Byron's *Beppo*, a debt Pushkin acknowledged in a prefatory note of 1825, when the first chapter was published; subsequent chapters were published every couple of years. But Pushkin's playful, digressive narrator, constantly intruding and commenting on the protagonists, is also modelled after Sterne, whom Pushkin had long admired. By the mid-1820s Pushkin had moved away from his earlier impassioned embrace of Byron to a critical appreciation. Commenting on the latter's death in 1824, Pushkin maintained that 'Byron's genius paled with his youth . . . after the 4th canto of *Childe Harold* we did not hear Byron, some other poet with a high human talent was writing.' (This was a questionable judgement, given that Pushkin would not yet have read much of Byron's late work.) By the late 1820s, Pushkin was gently mocking his previous enthusiasms: in Chapter Seven of *Evgenii Onegin*, Tatiana pokes fun at Evgenii's modish moodiness, referring to him as 'a Muscovite in [Childe] Harold's cloak'—'is he not a parody?'

As in St Petersburg, Pushkin spent a great deal of his time in Kishinev and Odessa gambling—often staking his manuscripts—carousing, duelling—he practised his aim by picking out letters on the wall of his room with wax bullets—and ardently pursuing a succession of women. According to Binyon, Pushkin 'fell violently in love, repeatedly, and at the least excuse'. Early entanglements included an adolescent infatuation with Karamzin's wife and an affair with a box-office girl at Petersburg Zoo. Pushkin's relations with the opposite sex seem to have fallen largely into two categories—deep emotional, and superficial erotic attachments—with a few quasi-maternal relationships forming a confused third. Among the latter was his friendship with Vera Viazemskaja, wife of his friend Petr Viazemskii, who wrote to her husband in 1824: 'I am trying to adopt him as a son . . . if he were less ugly, I'd call him a cherub'. Also while in Odessa, Pushkin developed an intense passion for Elise Vorontsova, wife of the governor-general of New Russia and Pushkin's superior. Vorontsov's irritation at Pushkin was partly responsible for his banishment from Odessa—although the immediate pretext was Pushkin's total neglect of his duties in dealing with a plague of locusts. '*La sauterelle l'a fait sauter!*', punned his uncle.

Although he had been isolated from political and literary circles during his exile, and had been a good deal more circumspect about his liberal inclinations since 1820, Pushkin had made casual atheistic remarks in his correspondence. This drew renewed disapprobation from the Emperor who, on agreeing to remove Pushkin from Odessa, decided he should be kept even further out of harm's way. From 1824–26, Pushkin was under virtual house arrest on the Gannibal family estate in Mikhailovskoe, two hundred miles southwest of Petersburg; his spurious schemes to secure

permission to go abroad failed, and his requests to be allowed to visit St Petersburg were turned down, deepening his sense of captivity in Russia's endless rural depths.

On one page of the manuscript of *Evgenii Onegin* Pushkin drew a gibbet from which five corpses are suspended. He learned of the executions of the leaders of the Decembrist rebellion on 24 July 1826; he had known all five of them, and many more of those exiled to Siberia. To the latter he addressed a poem of 1827—'Your heavy chains will fall,/ Your prisons crumble—and freedom/ Will greet you joyfully at the gate,/ And your brothers will place a sword into your hands.' Pushkin's absence from the major cities of the empire in the years prior to 1825 precluded any involvement in the conspiracy, as did his utter untrustworthiness—as Binyon notes, he was generally viewed as 'a crackbrained, giddy, intemperate and dissolute young rake . . . whose reason all too often seemed absent.' But Pushkin's sympathies were known, and much of the testimony presented at the Decembrists' trials mentioned his influence. Nikolai I despatched a spy to Mikhailovskoe to report on 'the conduct of the well-known versifier Pushkin, suspected of actions akin to the incitement of peasants to freedom'. In August 1826 Pushkin's name was cleared—the local priest apparently said 'he meddles in nothing and is as shy as a young girl'—and he was summoned to Moscow for an audience with the newly crowned Tsar in September 1826.

Nikolai began by asking him if he would have been among the rebels the previous December. Pushkin replied that he certainly would. But this seems to have been less an act of political defiance than a point of honour, since Pushkin's actions and writings of subsequent years suggest an accommodation with the autocratic order, in its most reactionary incarnation. Pushkin had become increasingly cautious in his political views since they resulted in banishment from St Petersburg in 1820, and while provincial isolation was gradually making clear to him the personal cost of opposition, the failure of the Decembrist rebellion interred the best hopes of an entire generation. An important shift in Pushkin's outlook seems, at any rate, to have taken place in Mikhailovskoe, since at his audience with Nikolai Pushkin apparently compared the new Tsar's current position with that of Peter the Great at the outset of his reign—perhaps also insinuating a potential equality in their historical stature. Subsequent poems were clearer in their flattery of the Tsar—'I have simply fallen in love with him', Pushkin gushed in 1828, after Nikolai had resumed hostilities with Persia, adding 'He has suddenly invigorated Russia/ With war, hopes and labours'. In 1831, Pushkin even offered to set up a journal that the government could use 'as a weapon in its action on public opinion'.

The Tsar, for his part, initially professed to be much taken with 'my Pushkin'. He may also have released the latter from exile as a shrewd

move to conciliate liberal opinion, after having dealt so ruthlessly with the Decembrists. His generosity extended further: he suspended usual censorship procedures for Pushkin, who would now submit works directly to the Tsar himself. But what Pushkin initially took as a blessing became a sinister obstruction, since his literary output now came within the remit of the Third Section, Nikolai's secret police. Pushkin could not so much as read one of his poems aloud without their approval, and was under constant surveillance for the rest of his life. The personalization of the relationship between writer and autocrat, along with the intense, tangled currents of suspicion and respect that flowed between the two men, recalls the dread-filled dependency of Soviet writers such as Bulgakov or Pasternak on Stalin; but where the latter's power stemmed from the threat of future repression, Pushkin was tied to Nikolai by seemingly genuine admiration, and by gratitude at his release from past exile.

Pushkin's political settling-down was accompanied by a certain recalibration of mores. Atheism now beat a retreat: in 1825, Pushkin somewhat incongruously offered a mass for the repose of Byron's soul. A letter to his friend Vasilii Zubkov of December 1826, meanwhile, suggests an imminent farewell to the dissipations of his youth: 'My life up to now so wandering, so stormy; my character so changeable, jealous, susceptible, violent and weak, all at the same time—that is what gives me moments of painful reflection.' Further food for thought may have been supplied by his affair with Olga Kalashnikova, daughter of the bailiff of Mikhailovskoe. She bore him a son in the summer of 1826, and was promptly packed off to Pushkin's father's estate at Boldino in Nizhnii Novgorod province, where the boy died two and a half months later.

In 1829 Pushkin drew up the so-called 'Don Juan list' of his past loves—two columns of sixteen and twenty-one names each, seeming to refer respectively to serious involvements and more fleeting fancies. The latter included Vera Viazemskaja, Olga Kalashnikova, and Elise Khitrovo, an older woman whose love for Pushkin seems not to have been reciprocated, but whose intelligent conversation and considerable knowledge of current affairs Pushkin clearly appreciated. Indeed, she seems to have been the only woman whose opinions he respected. His attitudes towards the opposite sex offered little hope of genuine intimacy. Misogyny, on the other hand, was in plentiful supply. 'Women are everywhere the same,' he wrote in an article of 1827.

Nature, which has given them a subtle mind and the most delicate sensibility, has all but denied them a sense of the beautiful. Poetry glides past their hearing without reaching their soul . . . Listen to their literary opinions, and you will be amazed by the falsity, even the coarseness of their understanding . . . Exceptions are rare.

Unlikely to be among them was the last person in the shorter of the Don Juan columns, Natalia Goncharova, whom Pushkin married on 18 February 1831. Binyon is a good deal more charitable about Pushkin's wife than previous biographers—in 1926 Prince Mirsky described her as 'a beautiful (and badly brought-up) doll, a costly plaything at the best'—but it is clear that Pushkin didn't see her as an intellectual companion. Rather, she was an attractive and fashionable young woman, a suitable partner for an habitu   of court circles, as Pushkin became in the late 1820s. Binyon is at pains to provide us with an image of conjugal happiness—four children and a stream of concerned, now tender, now scolding letters are the star witnesses—and perhaps for this reason omits any mention of an alleged liaison between Pushkin and his sister-in-law Aleksandra Goncharova in 1836–7. The evidence is insubstantial, but the rumour persists, and is addressed in other, less exhaustive biographies of Pushkin, such as Elaine Feinstein's solid 1998 study. Binyon's failure to discuss the possibility, even to dismiss it, is all the more unaccountable given his unsqueamish treatment of many less palatable aspects of Pushkin's character.

Prominent among the latter is his support for Russian imperialism. Wars with Persia in 1826–8 and Turkey in 1828–9 tightened Russia's grip on the Black Sea and Caucasus, and in 1829 Pushkin rushed to follow in the wake of General Paskievich's army en route to Erzurum—calling in on his retired hero Ermolov on his way south. The Polish rebellion of 1830, meanwhile, aroused in Pushkin a sentiment which Viazemskii said 'would be sinful to call patriotism, but was closer to pharisaism'. In a letter to Elise Khitrovo of December 1830, for example, Pushkin wrote: 'We can only pity the Poles. We are too powerful to hate them, the war which is about to begin will be a war of extermination—or should be.' His chief concern at the time was whether the European powers would stand by to let the Russians settle what he called, in a triumphal ode celebrating the fall of Warsaw published the following year, 'a dispute of Slavs between themselves'. Viazemskii was dismayed—'Go and hymn the government for taking such measures if your knees itch and you feel an irresistible urge to crawl with the lyre in your hands'—but Binyon observes that Pushkin's chauvinism was not sycophantic but disturbingly sincere.

Praise for the Warsaw odes came from an unexpected quarter. Chaadaev, who in 1829 had written a polemic about Russia's world historical insignificance and continuing barbarism, wrote to congratulate Pushkin: 'At last you have become a national poet'. The accolade—bizarre though the source was—must have pleased Pushkin, whose reputation had declined steadily since the rapturous reception of *Ruslan i Liudmila* and the first chapters of *Evgenii Onegin*. Though many key works were not published in Pushkin's lifetime, from the mid-1820s his output was incredibly varied: apart from

the usual stream of epigrams, there was spare, graceful prose whose economies were largely unappreciated at the time—*The Queen of Spades* (1834), the playful *Tales of Belkin* (1831), travel notes and critical articles; there were also dramatic works—*Boris Godunov* (1825) and the *Little Tragedies* (1830)—and epic poems—*The Bronze Horseman* (1833) and *Poltava* (1828), the latter celebrating Peter the Great's victory over Charles XII of Sweden in 1709. Two prose works that emerged from his research into the peasant revolts of 1773–5, *The Captain's Daughter* (1835) and *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion* (1833), further testify to Pushkin's increasing preoccupation with Russian history—a field 'as yet completely untilled', as he put it in 1836.

Pushkin heartily disagreed with Chaadaev's gloomy assessment of Russia's destiny, pointing to its present imperial might as 'something which will impress the future historian', and put Russia on a par with Europe. The initiator of the country's rise to prominence was, for Pushkin, Peter the Great, who has exerted a terrible fascination for many Russians. 'I am approaching Peter with fear and trembling', Pushkin wrote in April 1834, speaking of a work still unfinished at his death; the protagonist of *The Bronze Horseman*, driven mad by grief at the death of his beloved in the great St Petersburg flood of 1824, imagines the statue of Peter by Falconet coming alive and pursuing him through the streets with ominous, metallic strides. The poem was conceived as a response to verses written in 1832 by the Polish poet and erstwhile friend of Pushkin, Adam Mickiewicz, who was himself bitterly disappointed by Pushkin's tub-thumping delight at the crushing of Polish resistance. The two had met in 1826, when Pushkin had been so impressed by the other's talent for improvisation that he threw himself on the urbane Mickiewicz and exclaimed, 'What genius! What sacred fire! What am I compared to him?' They translated each other's poems, and retained respect for each other's talents. In 1837, Mickiewicz issued an open challenge to the man who killed Pushkin, seeking to avenge his death.

The origins of the duel lay in the pursuit of Natalia by Georges d'Anthès, a young French aristocrat who was passed off as the adopted son of the Dutch ambassador, Baron Heeckeren—recent scholarship suggests strongly that the two cohabited as lovers. Binyon credits Natalia with firmly resisting d'Anthès's advances, where previous biographers deemed that d'Anthès's interest was happily reciprocated. Whatever the truth of the situation, on 4 November 1836 Pushkin received an anonymous letter nominating him 'Coadjutor to the Grand Master of the Order of Cuckolds'. Authorship of the letter is much disputed, but Pushkin assumed it was the work of Heeckeren and immediately challenged d'Anthès to a duel. There followed a tangled series of negotiations during which Heeckeren resorted to the subterfuge that d'Anthès was actually in love with Natalia's sister, Ekaterina. Pushkin

was deeply, and justifiably sceptical, but d'Anthès followed the lie through to its conclusion and married Ekaterina on 10 January 1837.

However, d'Anthès immediately resumed his flirtations, and Pushkin challenged him again a mere fortnight later. On 27 January, the two exchanged shots. D'Anthès's bullet passed through his opponent's abdomen and shattered his sacrum. Pushkin's death agonies lasted two days, during which visitors constantly streamed in and out of his flat. Having been shriven, Pushkin received a letter from Nikolai I promising to see to the welfare of his family—a constant and increasing worry for Pushkin in his last years, as the expenses of his lifestyle and gambling debts mounted. (On his death he owed 138,988 roubles, whereas he earned a total of 255,180 roubles over the entire period from 1820–37.) He died on the afternoon of 29 January, and such was the public show of grief at the news—a reported 10,000 people paid their respects to his body in the apartment on the Moika—that the authorities interfered with the funeral, convinced that any further outpouring of popular sentiment 'would to some extent represent an indecent scene of triumph for the liberals', as a report by the corps of gendarmes put it. The venue was changed at the last minute, the body moved in the dead of night along a route flanked by scores of troops. Aleksandr Turgenev accompanied the coffin to its final resting place in the Sviatigorskii monastery in Pskov province, where Pushkin was buried alongside a mother to whom he had never been close in life.

Pushkin's literary reputation began to recover only in the 1850s, but had reached its present impregnable heights by 1880. The speed and thoroughness of the process can in part be attributed to the outstanding crop of writers and critics of the second half of the nineteenth century—Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Belinskii—all of whom acknowledged Russian literature's immense debt to Pushkin. The sheer breadth of his output gives the impression of a literary Creation, all potential forms arriving in an explosive instant. Ivan Turgenev, speaking at the unveiling of the Pushkin monument in 1880, seemed to suggest precisely such a demiurgic role: 'it fell to Pushkin alone to fulfil two tasks, which in other countries have been separated by at least a century: to establish a language, and create a literature'. Yet in 1921, the Formalist critic Boris Eikhenbaum spoke of Pushkin as 'the end of the long road traversed by eighteenth-century Russian poetry', an assimilator of the previous century's traditions whose 'historical mission' was 'to set Russian poetical language on an even keel'. Indeed, Pushkin's formal precision and laconic expressivity suggest a classical temperament, traversed rather than permeated by Romantic passions and Byronic thunder.

Pushkin's mythic status in Russia did not, however, extend overseas. His lack of foreign admirers—Prosper Mérimée translated some poems and wrote the first critical article on him in a foreign language in 1868, but his

friend Flaubert was unimpressed: '*il est plat, votre poète*'—is in part due to the difficulty of rendering the seamless flow of his language across registers and moods. Pushkin's style mirrors, and magnifies, the grammatical economy and suppleness of Russian itself. Then there is the brilliance of his verbal inventiveness, which would complicate any search for equivalents. It is perhaps unsurprising that Pushkin owed much of his early fame in the West to musical settings of his works—Glinka's *Ruslan i Liudmila* (1842), and above all Tchaikovsky's *Evgenii Onegin* (1881) and *The Queen of Spades* (1890)—and that his prose was widely diffused before his verse.

Binyon captures well the restless energy of Pushkin, and the level of detail of his account is formidable. His solid resistance to hagiography is also commendable. Yet although he makes telling use of Pushkin's own words in a few cases—his sincerely bloodthirsty imperialism, for instance, or his objectification of women—there is comparatively little sense here of the mind behind the contradictions and confrontations. Pushkin's voluminous correspondence is more often adduced to support facts than to reveal opinions. There are sporadic references to Pushkin's reading, but no indication of its voraciousness or character—of Pushkin's library of just over 1,500 books, two-thirds were in foreign languages; a glance at a list made by scholars elsewhere reveals, among other things, a substantial interest in the English Civil War and French Revolution. Binyon's shyness towards ideas—an essential if intangible component of Pushkin's world, after all—leaves Pushkin's intellect largely uncharted, a sea of storms and inconsistencies. But Binyon's subject is a flawed glass whose fractures preclude prismatic clarity, and there is rich testimony here to the world in which Pushkin's paradoxes unfolded.

Michael Newman, *Ralph Miliband and the Politics of the New Left*
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SUSAN WATKINS

A SOCIALIST CASSANDRA

In 1989 Ralph Miliband outlined two possible scenarios for the future of class conflict. In the first, the deregulation and de-unionization of economic life would be mirrored at the political level. Social Democratic and Labour parties might retain their names but the notion of a fundamental challenge to capitalism would have become decisively marginalized. Conflicts would continue but would not constitute a threat to the social order; they might even strengthen it, by functioning as safety valve or prompt to minor reforms. An exception would be terrorism, practised by tiny groups at the extremes of the political spectrum. This would be 'a problem and a nuisance' but quite incapable of destabilizing a securely legitimated system.

Miliband himself dissented from this view. Firstly, he pointed out in *Divided Societies*, such a development should be understood not as a lessening of social conflict but rather a massive extension of 'class struggle from above'. More importantly, the nature of capitalism itself—a process of domination and exploitation that was intrinsically incapable of making rational or humane use of the immense resources it had brought into being—would renew, from generation to generation, the search for a systemic alternative. The balance between a sober appreciation of class forces and reasoned hope for a better world was central to Miliband's work as a political scientist, which provided such a solid keel for the various generations of the New Left, through his books—*Parliamentary Socialism*, *The State in Capitalist Society* and others—the annual *Socialist Register* and his many contributions to this journal, of which he was a founding editor. Michael Newman's meticulously researched biography casts new light on the formation of Miliband's world view and the passions that lay behind it.

He was born not Ralph but Adolphe, in Brussels in 1924. His parents—Samuel, an artisan leather-worker, and Renée, who ran a market stall selling hats—were newly arrived in the city: working-class, Yiddish-speaking immigrants, fleeing the economic chaos of postwar Poland. Samuel had been a member of either the Polish Socialist Party (Miliband's recollection) or the Jewish Socialist Bund (that of his younger sister Nan). The price of political citizenship in Belgium was more than they could afford, but Samuel Miliband taught himself enough French to follow international affairs in the newspapers and to discuss with his nine-year-old son Hitler's accession to power, the Spanish Civil War and especially, as Miliband recalled later, 'the daily events in Paris, changes of ministry, the respective merits of this or that leader'. If his parents inevitably linked the rise of Nazism to earlier experiences of Polish anti-Semitism,

The French connexion was greatly strengthened by the fact that Léon Blum, a Jew, was leader of the French Socialist Party, and in 1936 Prime Minister . . . The political climate in our home was generally and loosely left: it was unthinkable that a Jew, our sort of Jew—the artisan worker, self-employed, poor, Yiddish-speaking, unassimilated, non-religious—could be anything but socialistic.

He was sixteen when the Nazi assault on Belgium tore the family apart. Miliband and his father fled towards the coast, walking all through the night to reach Ostend where they had to battle for a place on the last boat to Britain. They reached London on 19 May 1940. His mother and little sister, too young for the journey, clung on in Brussels until the round-up of the Jews in 1942, when they managed to find refuge on a farm. Working as a furniture-shifter in blitz-struck London—and now renamed Ralph at the insistence of his landlady, who found Adolphe insufficiently patriotic—Miliband recorded his impressions of the country (in French) in his teenage diary:

England first. This slogan is taken for granted by the English people as a whole. To lose their empire would be the worst possible humiliation . . . When you hear the English talk of this war you sometimes almost want them to lose it to show them how things are.

A few weeks later, exploring bomb-sites in the West End: 'You feel in these ruins a wealth which hasn't gone, which will begin again tomorrow, and for which this bombing is not a major crisis', whereas: 'in Whitechapel, in the Jewish area and the slums, the devastation is really terrible. Rows of people, waiting to be evacuated. New wretched refugees, like the others, with a bundle on their shoulder. Shame and indignation and fury. You ask yourself: how can they live like this?' The instinctive, almost innocent

sense of moral outrage at such inequity was not just the reaction of a war-traumatized working-class teenager. Four years later, as a Royal Navy interpreter, he would describe the 'flagrant, enormous' difference between officers and men on board an overcrowded destroyer as 'the negation of elementary democracy'—a gulf as wide as that between 'a palatial 300-room country house and a Lambeth slum'.

By this time Miliband was writing in English, the nightmare of its mastery already quite expunged. Early in 1941 he had enrolled at Acton Technical College with a sense of himself, as he recorded—whether through his parents' encouragement or from his 'Jewish-socialistic' 1930s background—as 'a budding intellectual'. His early essays, painfully composed in the alien tongue, earned him 4 or 5 marks out of ten and strictures on his grammar. One on 'Death' that cited Darwin and Freud (on the adoption of primitive funeral rites in modern society) was returned with the comment that future work would not be marked unless spelling mistakes were corrected. 'Those verbs', Miliband would cry in a subsequent essay, imploring his reader 'to imagine the torture of someone who not only *has* to write an essay, but *has* to write it in a foreign language':

Those verbs danse their crazy dance; like worms who dance on a grave, they dance in my head . . . This is to what amounts my writing of an English essay. Thereafter (notice my courage) I read it again. To me it is perfect. Not a syllable misplaced. The essay comes back crossed and recrossed, the marks of the blue pencil as abundant as the words. The reward of my patience, my courage in fact, all the sentiments which are the best of myself.

Nevertheless he managed to matriculate that summer and, in October 1941, started at the London School of Economics, evacuated to Cambridge. His own writings powerfully convey the joy of entering 'another world': icy winters heated by 'foul but hot coffee', intellectual controversy and cigarette smoke. The 350-strong student body—the majority were women—was highly cosmopolitan, left-dominated and, for Miliband, animated by the intense excitement of close contact with Harold Laski. 'He's become *pan brat* with me', he boasted in a letter to Samuel, early in 1942. With Mancunian paternalism, Laski—the subject of an earlier book by Newman—called him 'a grand lad, one of the best I've had in years'.

A far more incisive political scientist than his teacher, and distinctly to his left, Miliband would retain Laski's focus on the discipline's core concepts—parties, classes, states—and breadth of comparative reference. Laski helped him personally in crucial ways—securing a Royal Navy posting, from 1943–46, that overrode competing Belgian claims; intervening with the Attlee administration to reunite the Miliband family, separated for years after the War by Labour's anti-Semitic immigration policies, which kept

Renée and Nan stranded in Belgium. In 1947, under Laski's supervision, Miliband began the immense labour of his PhD thesis on radical thought during the French Revolution, examining the political ideas of the illiterate *menu peuple* through their expression in police records, court hearings and other primary sources (the thousand-page manuscript was submitted in 1956). In 1949, Laski got him his first post as Assistant Lecturer in the Government Department of the LSE. 'We never felt compelled to agree with him', Miliband wrote in warm tribute, after Laski's sudden death in 1950, 'because it was so obvious that he loved a good fight, and did not hide behind his years and experience'. In other respects, Laski's legacy was more ambiguous. As a teenage refugee Miliband had found his way to Marx's grave in Highgate and made a silent vow of allegiance, clenched fist raised. Under Laski's tutelage, however, he steered clear of any Communist affiliation, eventually joining the Labour Party to work with the left Bevanites for a ten-year span from 1951.

His formation was thus quite distinct from that of most of the British New Left which emerged after 1956—the ex-CP dissidents of the *New Reasoner*, the left bohemians around the *Universities and Left Review* or the young Aldermaston marchers. In some ways, Miliband's experience was already much broader. Unlike CP members, he had been able to go to the United States and had taught summer courses at the radical Roosevelt College in Chicago in the late 1940s—excited by the city but horrified by the McCarthyism: 'papers and radio full of stuff about reds, spies, loyalty'. In 1957, C. Wright Mills erupted into his life, dazzling the students at an LSE seminar in April and, in July, whirling Miliband off on a trip to Poland. Newman makes surprisingly little of this postwar tour of the land of his forebears, or of the political and intellectual impact of the relationship with Mills; but when Miliband spoke of *The Power Elite* as 'intense, muscular, alive—one of the very few books to glitter among the grey mass of what passed for social analysis in the frightened fifties', he was surely, in part, evoking its author.

The emergence of the New Left in the late 1950s offered—finally—the possibility of genuine intellectual collaboration at home. Contacted by John Saville to write for the *New Reasoner* in 1958, Miliband contributed substantial essays on socialist strategy, and wrote book reviews for Stuart Hall and Raphael Samuel at the ULR. Towards the end of 58 he joined Saville and Edward Thompson on the *New Reasoner* editorial board and, a year later, wrote a 'letter of thanks' to the pair of them:

It's an awkward letter to write in some ways. Actually it's just to say a personal thank you to both of you. In effect you have given me a sense of socialist comradeship I've not had since early student days . . . You have both made me

feel that, beside the sense of belonging to a movement, I was also involved in a personal comradeship with people who had more experience than I, who could share in a direct way the political worries I have, who spoke my language and who welcomed me as one of their number.

What he badly needed now, he went on, was 'not reassurance but really solid criticism'. He had been wrestling with a manuscript on the politics of Labour—'I've worried myself into a fine state about the whole affair, and now feel the thing is damn awful'.

Parliamentary Socialism, published in 1961, remains a landmark of British political historiography, a coolly scathing account of Labour's record, from its subaltern role in the First World War government, dedicatedly funnelling troops to the Front—Keir Hardie: 'the lads who have gone forth to fight their country's battles must not be disheartened by discordant notes at home'—through MacDonald's 1931 cuts in unemployment benefit, in deference to the Tories' view that these were better implemented by a Labour prime minister, to the 'circumspection' of the 1945 Labour Manifesto, in which boards of nationalized industries would be dominated by businessmen and financiers, while Britain's foreign policy, as US Secretary of State Byrne noted, was 'not altered in the slightest by the replacement of Churchill and Eden by Attlee and Bevin'. Miliband had a superb sense for detail (Attlee: 'The King always used to say that I looked very surprised at the extent of our success'). His anatomy of what *Parliamentary Socialism* termed the 'sickness of labourism'—the knightly order of trade-union general secretaries and crippling inhibitions of the parliamentary Left—became the starting point for a radical British politics of the 1960s.

Miliband was alone on the *New Reasoner* editorial board in opposing the 1959 merger with the ULR that founded *New Left Review*. It was partly because he felt so deeply involved with the *New Reasoner*, he explained to Thompson and Saville, that he had 'fought so stubbornly against its disappearance'. Another reason—swiftly vindicated—was his scepticism as to the viability of such a heterogeneous editorial project as the infant NLR. Miliband left with Thompson, Saville and others when its unwieldy board fractured in April 1963. That same evening, he sat down to type the proposal for the annual that would become the *Socialist Register*, which he would co-edit until his death in 1994.

Thirty years later, Miliband would look back with some satisfaction at the *Register's* solid record of contemporary political analysis and tally of classic pieces (though early hopes for 'culture, Freud and all that jazz' never materialized). At the time, though, he was ferociously self-critical, chastising Saville, his co-editor, that the *Register's* contents—Isaac Deutscher on Maoism, in 1964, and on Khrushchev in 1965; Ernest Mandel on neo-capitalism; Marcel Liebman on the meaning of 1914; Lukács on Solzhenitsyn—were 'not good

enough . . . We simply must raise our standards: this year is *no* improvement on last—most disappointing'. Miliband's editorship drew on a strong network of political friendships. Marion Kozak describes, as well as Deutscher, Mandel and Liebman, 'Leo Huberman, Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff of *Monthly Review*, K. S. Karol, André Gorz and other French intellectuals, Rossana Rossanda in Italy. Ralph had many American friends from the late 1940s as well as New Left acquaintances he had met through C. Wright Mills . . . and the Poles, including Kolakowski, Schaff and Lange'.

If *Socialist Register* published strong pieces on anti-colonial struggles and the Vietnam War, the demands of the new student movement initially caught its editors on the back foot. On sabbatical to finish *The State in Capitalist Society*, Miliband followed the events of May 68 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia from a distance. Back at the LSE that autumn he was shaken by the students' adoption of direct action—endorsing the phrase, 'fascism of the Left' in a letter to Marcel Liebman. But what horrified him most was the administration's immediate resort to brutal authoritarianism: 'Sophisticated Oakeshottism is a fairly thin crust; when it cracks, as it did here, a rather ugly, visceral sort of conservatism emerges'. The events of 1969—the students' protests against the School's investments in South Africa and its heavy-handed security measures at home were countered by mass arrests, followed by the illegal dismissal of a lecturer, Robin Blackburn—shattered Miliband's relationship with the LSE. At the time he tried to mobilize the academic staff to resist any expulsions; later he reproached himself for not having resigned on the spot, for the atmosphere there now seemed irremediably poisoned. In 1972, despite the wrench of leaving London, he accepted the politics chair at Leeds; teaching part-time, after 1977—the strain of the LSE business compounded by a bad heart attack—at Brandeis, Toronto and CUNY.

The State in Capitalist Society had been published in 1969 and Newman, drawing on Miliband's notes, gives an illuminating account of its genesis. The book was dedicated to Mills, whose study of the interlocking circles of the US 'power elite'—warlords, corporate rich and political directorate—was a clear influence. 'I mourn the death of C. Wright Mills, bitterly and personally', Miliband had written in these pages in 1962, after Mills's final heart attack that March. Two months later, in Chicago, he noted in a diary: 'I decided tonight—and discussed with Marion—the writing of a big book on *The State*, something that would take possibly five years, that would be theoretical, analytical and prescriptive . . . with the world as my province': a detailed comparison of the state in capitalist, socialist and ex-colonial countries, 'history, sociology and politics combined in one intimate whole'. The classical Marxist concept of the state as executive agent of the ruling class was 'enormously helpful' but not enough: 'an instrument is not always

pliable, develops interests, values, procedures of its own. *But need to explore*', he underlined. The well-known result was a major sociological study of the operations of the state throughout the advanced capitalist world—the US and Britain, France, Germany and Japan; a solid refutation of the mainstream conception of a neutral instrument, responsive to the democratic interplay of competing forces.

It was a difficult book to write. Struggling with the conclusion through the spring and summer of 1968, Miliband wrote to Saville that the work had 'brought out certain quite basic and unresolved tensions in my thinking'. The final chapter was far-sighted but sombre: if the state in advanced capitalist societies served primarily as guardian of dominant economic interests, the limited civil and political liberties it permitted were still of crucial value, and the goal of socialist strategy should be their radical extension and fulfilment. But in the absence of political agents—serious mass parties—ready to carry forward that agenda, the likelihood for the decades ahead was rather a new form of authoritarianism, which preserved a carapace of democracy while reducing the power of representative institutions, whittling trade-union rights and restricting the area of legitimate dissent. Social Democratic parties, he thought, would play a key role in bringing this about.

To re-read the Miliband–Poulantzas debate today, in the hour of Cooper and Bobbitt, is to be forcefully reminded that, despite the polarizations of the time—'instrumentalist' vs 'structuralist'—its two protagonists shared a common strategic project. Even Miliband's impatience in private correspondence ('there is a vast amount of sheer charlatanism in the Althusserians' stuff') has the dismissive ring of a family quarrel. Nicos Poulantzas's 1969 review of *The State in Capitalist Society* in NLR had questioned whether Miliband's method—the direct rebuttal of the 'neutral' state by the use of empirical data—did not leave him 'floundering in the swamp of his adversary's ideological imagination': overstressing the role and motivation of the individual (bureaucrat, businessman, politician) as social actor; failing to comprehend them as essentially the bearers of the objective structure of the state, itself relatively autonomous from the various ruling-class fractions.

In his reply (NLR 59), Miliband mounted a gallant defence of the uses of empirical validation—a procedure to which, he suggested, Poulantzas and other Althusserians 'give rather less attention than it deserves'. To dismiss the subjective nature of state elites completely—reducing them to the merest 'executants of policies imposed by "the system"'—resulted in a 'structural super-determinism' that would detect no difference at all between a state ruled by liberal or social democrats, and one run by fascists. It was, he argued, equally as false as the obverse position, which assumed that the election of a Social Democratic government, plus a few changes in administrative personnel, would impart an entirely new character to the state.

By the 1980s, Miliband had evolved into an elder statesman of the independent Left, increasingly committed to the practical political work of building a radical alternative to New Labour: the Socialist Society; the Chesterfield Conferences; the Independent Left Corresponding Society (with Tony Benn). If in retrospect some of these attempts seem myopic, they nevertheless provided valuable opportunities for molecular socialist education. With his straight-backed, naval bearing and clarity of address, Miliband was a compelling speaker. His death has robbed a new generation of young radicals, sickened by Blairite sermons for the neoliberal order and its wars, of a great teacher.

Admirably clear in its construction and scrupulously researched, perhaps the most valuable contribution of Newman's book is its thorough pillaging of Miliband's letters, diaries and private papers. Here, Miliband's character—his enthusiasms, his temper—springs from the page, and with it the intensity of feeling that drove his scholarship. This goes a long way to compensate for an otherwise rather drily text-based work. There is no attempt to evoke, or conjure up from other sources, the atmosphere of 1930s Brussels, navy life or postwar London: the flats, the cafés, the movies, the emotional life—'culture, Freud and all that jazz'. There seems to be not a single adjective of colour—red or brown, green or yellow—in the entire book. In this sense, the promise of Newman's subtitle, '*and the Politics of the New Left*', goes unfulfilled. There is no broader portrait of the movement of which Miliband was a part, or the times through which he lived: the intensity of political debate, the clash of personalities, the historical breaking points; the particular inflexions of culture, background and individual psychology with intellectual or political allegiance and tradition.

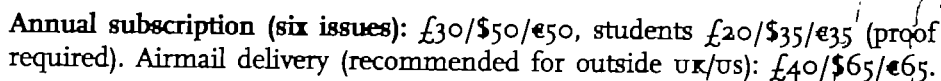
Lacking such a backdrop, Newman is driven to a rather forced insistence on the originality of Miliband's political positions, which on the whole fell squarely within the broad consensus of the independent left. On the Soviet Union, for instance—moving from postwar scepticism, combined with instinctive hostility to McCarthyism, to qualified optimism for the Khrushchevite thaw, to a strong condemnation of the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia that led him to redefine the Communist states as 'oligarchical collectivist', a position reinforced during the return of the Cold War in the early eighties—Miliband was not out of step with broad layers of the American and European left. On Palestine, too, his defence of Israel during the 1973 war—he saw the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba as a threat to the state's existence—and subsequent powerful condemnation of Israeli policies during the first *intifada*, were not unusual.

More striking was his overall political consistency, holding steady against the prevailing winds of both the 1960s and the 1980s; and his prescience. In his 1985 essay in *NLR*, 'The New Revisionists', he argued that a crucial

weakness of those fleeing rightwards towards populism, localism and identity politics was their refusal to analyse, or even acknowledge, the 'shape and strategy of the enemy': their backs were turned to the tidal wave of neo-liberal restructuring that was about to come crashing down on their heads. Yet the wealth of personal material that Newman presents does much to illuminate the sensibility that lay behind such far-sighted analysis. From early on—a working-class Jewish boy growing up, with eyes wide open, in inter-war Europe—Miliband combined a strong sense of internationalism with a remarkably clear grasp of power structures and of what he would describe, in *Parliamentary Socialism*, as 'the hard and basic fact of proletarian existence'. Class, religious background, nationality, or its lack—he put 'Belgian' in inverted commas when describing, in his teenage diaries, what he felt marked him out from his English co-workers in the bomb-struck house-clearance business—all clearly played a part; but there was, above all, the attraction of ideas.

For what was most distinctive in Miliband's contribution to the New Left was the particular quality of independence in his thinking—expressed with a calmness and lucidity to which the strongly emotional tones of his personal correspondence stand in interesting counterpoint. A striking example is his classic 1979 essay on the role of the individual in history, 'Political Action, Determinism and Contingency'. Miliband pinpoints the inadequacy of classical Marxist thought on the question—its lazy reliance on a few famous formulations. He carefully unpicks the argument that, if not Napoleon—or Hitler, or Stalin—the times would have thrown up another similar figure, with the same results; and that the role of such 'accidents' as character can only be to accelerate or delay the general course of development. Instead, he urges, we need to conceptualize two different, but interrelated, historical processes: 'transgenerational' changes taking place over centuries—the shift from feudalism to capitalism, for instance—in which contingencies will indeed have only a minor effect; and 'generational' history, at the level of decades, where individual interventions—Lenin in 1917—may have a decisive impact. In a transgenerational perspective, the Bolshevik revolution will 'work its way into the tissue of time': Lenin loses his importance. Yet if these long-range processes suffuse generational history, they do not negate it. For nobody really worries about the posterity of twenty generations hence and 'there is enough "openness" in generational history to make the actions of individuals count, and their involvement meaningful'. Miliband's own interventions in his time live on, in his books and essays; but his personal writings, amply extracted here, give a vivid sense of the man behind them—making this a good book to have.

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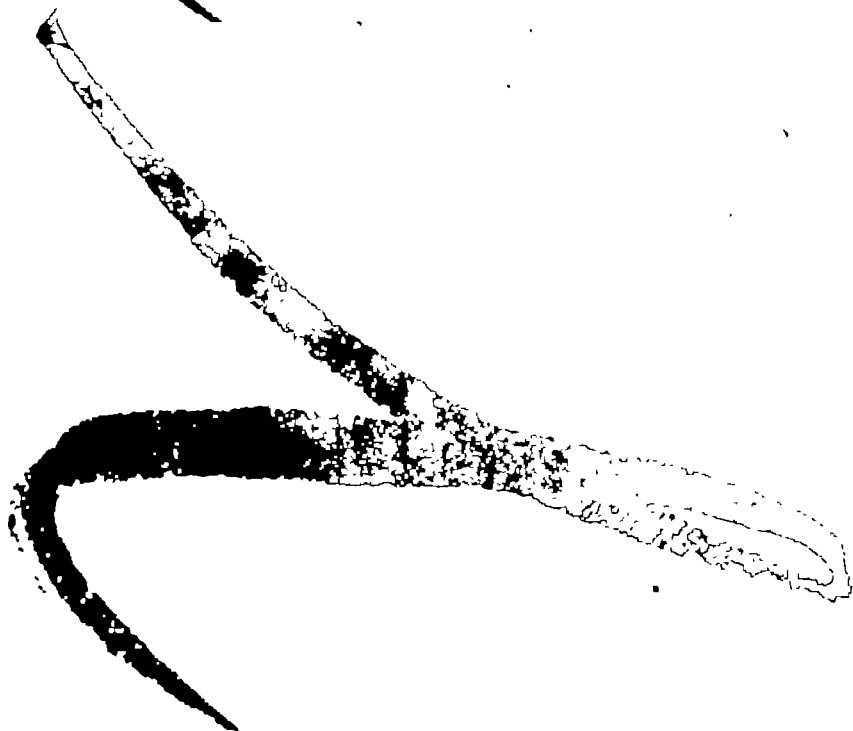
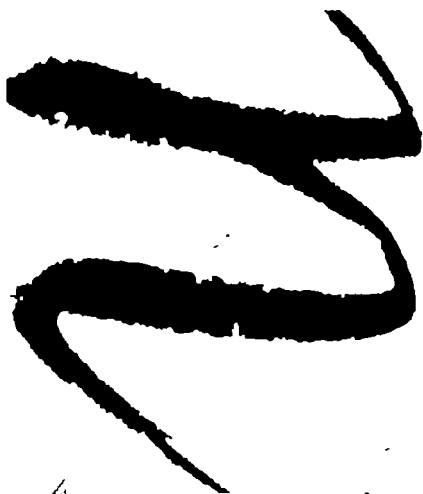
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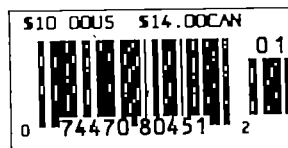
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Replying to critics of his 'Conjectures on World Literature' (NLR 1), Franco Moretti considers the objections to a world-systems theory of the relations between centre and periphery in the sphere of the novel or poetry, and proposes some new hypotheses about the morphology of forms and the politics of comparative literary studies.

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The one-sided love story of Theodor Adorno and Thomas Mann and its comedy of errors, as the philosopher wooed, counselled and was misused or rebuffed by the novelist. What was Adorno's exact role in the genesis of *Doctor Faustus*, while the two shared an Angeleno exile? Why did they never meet again after the war? Who was the real original of Adrian Leverkühn?

SERVAAS STORM & RO NAASTEPAD: The Dutch Distress

For more than a decade the Netherlands was the cynosure of European social democracy: the society where inflation was mastered, growth lifted, unemployment lowered, welfare trimmed and—not least—where stock ownership became more widely diffused than in any other European country. Amid such blessings, how could Dutch voters turn to Pim Fortuyn? A diagnostic of the strains underlying the Netherlands' variant of neoliberalism.

BOOK REVIEWS

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MICHAEL WOOD on Efraim Kristal, *Invisible Work: Borges and Translation*. Original texts—Gide and Kafka, Wilde and Woolf—and their re-creation in the lotteries of another language, as thought and practised by the author of *Fictions*.

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GIOVANNI ARRIGHI

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GLOBAL TURBULENCE

‘DEPRESSION’, WROTE Thorstein Veblen shortly after the end of the Great Depression of 1873–96, ‘is primarily a malady of the affections of the business men. That is the seat of the difficulty. The stagnation of industry and the hardship suffered by the workmen and other classes are of the nature of symptoms and secondary effects’. To be efficacious remedies must, therefore, be such ‘as to reach this emotional seat of the trouble and . . . restore profits to a “reasonable” rate’.¹ Between 1873 and 1896 prices had fallen unevenly but inexorably, in what David Landes has called ‘the most drastic deflation in the memory of man’. Along with prices, the rate of interest had dropped ‘to the point where economic theorists began to conjure with the possibility of capital so abundant as to be a free good. And profits shrank, while what was now recognized as periodic depressions seemed to drag on interminably. The economic system appeared to be running down’.²

In reality, the economic system was not ‘running down’. Production and investment continued to grow not just in the newly industrializing countries of the time (most notably, Germany and the US) but in Britain as well—so much so that, writing at the same time as Landes, another historian could declare the Great Depression of 1873–96 nothing but a ‘myth’.³ Nevertheless, as Veblen suggests, there is no contradiction in saying that there was a ‘great depression’ at a time of continuing expansion in

production and investment. On the contrary: the great depression was not a myth precisely *because* production and trade, in Britain and in the world economy at large, had continued to expand too rapidly for profits to be maintained at what was considered a 'reasonable' rate.

More specifically, the great expansion of world trade from the middle of the nineteenth century had led to a system-wide intensification of competitive pressures on the agencies of capital accumulation. An increasing number of business enterprises, from an increasing number of locations across the UK-centred world economy, were getting in one another's way in the procurement of inputs and disposal of outputs, thereby destroying one another's previous 'monopolies'—that is, their more-or-less exclusive control over particular market niches.

This shift from monopoly to competition was probably the most important single factor in setting the mood for European industrial and commercial enterprise. Economic growth was now also economic struggle—struggle that served to separate the strong from the weak, to discourage some and toughen others, to favour the new . . . nations at the expense of the old. Optimism about the future of indefinite progress gave way to uncertainty and a sense of agony.⁴

But then, all of a sudden, as if by magic,

the wheel turned. In the last years of the century, prices began to rise and profits with them. As business improved, confidence returned—not the spotty, evanescent confidence of the brief booms that had punctuated the gloom of the preceding decades, but a general euphoria such as had not prevailed since . . . the early 1870s. Everything seemed right again—in spite of rattlings of arms and monitory Marxist references to the 'last stage' of capitalism. In all of western Europe, these years live on in memory as the good old days—the Edwardian era, *la belle époque*.⁵

As we shall see, there was nothing magical about the sudden restoration of profits to a more 'reasonable' level, and the consequent recovery of the British and Western bourgeoisies from the malady provoked by 'excessive' competition. For now, let us simply note that not everyone benefited from the 'beautiful times' of 1896–1914. Internationally, the main beneficiary of the recovery was Britain. As its industrial supremacy

¹ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of Business Enterprise*, New Brunswick, NJ 1978, p. 241. I would like to thank Perry Anderson and Beverly Silver for their comments.

² David Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present*, Cambridge 1969, p. 231.

³ S. B. Saul, *The Myth of the Great Depression, 1873–96*, London 1969.

⁴ Landes, *Unbound Prometheus*, p. 240. ⁵ Landes, *Unbound Prometheus*, p. 231.

waned, its finance triumphed and its services as shipper, trader, insurance broker and intermediary in the world's system of payments became more indispensable than ever.⁶ But even within Britain not everybody prospered. Particularly noteworthy was the overall decline of British real wages after the mid-1890s, which reversed the rapidly rising trend of the previous half-century.⁷ For the working class of the then hegemonic power, the *belle époque* was thus a time of containment after the preceding half-century of improvement in its economic condition. This no doubt gave an additional boost to the renewed euphoria of the British bourgeoisie. Soon, however, the 'rattling of arms' got out of hand, precipitating a crisis from which the British-centred world-capitalist system would never recover.

Robert Brenner's tightly argued and richly documented book, *The Boom and the Bubble: The US and the World Economy*, does not refer to world capitalism's late-nineteenth-century experience of depression, revival and crisis.⁸ The central argument of the book, however, continually invites a comparison between that earlier period and what Brenner calls the 'persistent stagnation' of 1973–93, followed by the 'revival' of the US and world economies. The purpose of this article is not so much to develop such a comparison as to use the earlier experience as a foil in assessing the validity and limits of Brenner's argument. In the first part of what follows, I shall reconstruct as best I can Brenner's analysis, focusing on its most interesting and essential aspects. In the second section, I re-examine the argument critically, focusing on its weaknesses and limits. I will conclude by incorporating my critiques into a revised version of Brenner's argument.

I. THE ECONOMICS OF GLOBAL TURBULENCE

Brenner's objective in *The Boom and the Bubble*, as in his earlier 'Economics of Global Turbulence', is to provide evidence in support of

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain since 1750*, London 1968, p. 125.

⁷ Saul, *Myth*, pp. 28–34; Michael Barratt Brown, *The Economics of Imperialism*, Harmondsworth 1974, table 14.

⁸ Verso: London and New York 2002; hereafter BB. This article will also deal with themes that are developed in more detail in Brenner's earlier text, 'The Economics of Global Turbulence: A Special Report on the World Economy, 1950–98', NLR 1/229, May–June 1998; hereafter GT.

three closely related propositions. The first is that the *transformation* of the long expansion of the 1950s and 1960s into the comparative stagnation of the 1970s and 1980s was inscribed in the forces that drove the expansion. The second is that the *persistence* of comparative stagnation, from 1973 to 1993, was due primarily to the ways in which the business and governmental organizations of the leading capitalist states responded to the sharp and generalized fall in profitability that marked the initial transformation of expansion into stagnation. And the third contention is that the *revival* of the US economy after 1993 was not based on a resolution of the problems underlying the long downturn; indeed, it may actually have aggravated them, as witness the world-economic crisis of 1997–98 and the potentially even more serious crisis that the US and world economies have experienced since the bursting of the ‘new economy’ bubble.

Uneven development: from boom to crisis

As argued in detail in ‘Global Turbulence’, and briefly summarized at the outset of *The Boom and the Bubble*, Brenner sees both the long boom of the 1950s and 1960s and the crisis of profitability between 1965 and 1973, which brought the boom to an end, as rooted in what he calls ‘uneven development’. In Brenner’s definition, this is the process whereby laggards in capitalist development seek to and eventually succeed in catching up with the world-economic leaders.⁹

Focusing on Germany and Japan as the most successful among the laggards who, after the Second World War, attempted to catch up with prior developmental achievements of the US, Brenner argues that it was the capacity of these two countries to combine the high-productivity technologies, pioneered by the United States, with the large, low-wage labour supplies crowding their comparatively backward and rural small-business sectors, that pushed up their rates of profit and investment. Through the early 1960s this tendency did not negatively affect US

⁹ GT, pp. 39–137, and BB, pp. 9–24. Brenner’s use of the expression ‘uneven development’ echoes Trotsky’s and Lenin’s but differs radically from the more common contemporary deployment designating the tendency of capitalist development to polarize and diversify geographical space. See especially Samir Amin, *Unequal Development*, New York 1976; and Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, Oxford 1984. Throughout this article I will use the expression in the same sense as Brenner.

production and profit, because 'goods produced abroad remained for the most part unable to compete in the US market and because US producers depended to only a small extent on overseas sales'. In this crucial respect, therefore, 'uneven development was . . . still to a surprising extent separate development'.¹⁰ Indeed, although 'uneven economic development did entail the *relative* decline of the US domestic economy . . . it was also a precondition for the continued vitality of the dominant forces within the US political economy':

US multinational corporations and international banks, aiming to expand overseas, needed profitable outlets for their foreign direct investment. Domestically based manufacturers, needing to increase exports, required fast-growing overseas demand for their goods. An imperial US state, bent on 'containing communism' and keeping the world safe for free enterprise, sought economic success for its allies and competitors as the foundation for the political consolidation of the post-war capitalist order . . . All these forces thus depended upon the economic dynamism of Europe and Japan for the realization of their own goals.¹¹

In short, up to the early 1960s, uneven development was a positive-sum game, which buttressed 'a symbiosis, if a highly conflictual and unstable one, of leader and followers, of early and later developers, and of hegemon and hegemonized'.¹² To paraphrase Landes's account of the great depression of 1873–96, it had not yet become 'economic struggle'—a zero- or even negative-sum game that would benefit some at the expense of others. In Brenner's own account of the onset of the long downturn of 1973–93, this is precisely what uneven development became between 1965 and 1973. By then Germany and Japan had not just caught up but had 'forge[d] ahead of the US leader . . . in one key industry after another—textiles, steel, automobiles, machine tools, consumer electronics'. More important, the newer, lower-cost producers based in these and other follower countries began 'invading markets hitherto dominated by producers of the leader regions, especially the US and also the UK'.¹³

This irruption of lower-priced goods into the US and world markets undermined the ability of US manufacturers 'to secure the established rate of return on their placements of capital and labour', provoking,

¹⁰ GT, pp. 91–2.

¹¹ BB, pp. 14–15.

¹² BB, p. 15.

¹³ GT, p. 41, 105.

between 1965 and 1973, a decline in the rate of return on their capital stock of over 40 per cent. US manufacturers responded to this intensification of competition at home and abroad in various ways. They priced products below full cost—that is, they sought the established rate of profit only on their circulating capital; they repressed the growth of wage costs; and they updated their plant and equipment. Ultimately, however, the most decisive US weapon in the incipient competitive struggle was a drastic devaluation of the dollar relative to the Japanese yen and German mark.¹⁴

End of the gold-dollar standard

To some extent, the devaluation was itself the result of the deterioration in the US balance of trade that ensued from the loss of competitiveness of American vis-à-vis German and Japanese manufacturers. Nevertheless, the effects of this trade balance on the values of the three currencies were considerably amplified by government policies that destabilized—and eventually disrupted—the international gold-dollar standard regime, established at the end of the Second World War. For the German and Japanese governments responded to the inflationary pressures engendered in their domestic economies by the export-led production boom with a repression of domestic demand, which further increased both their trade surpluses and speculative demand for their currencies.¹⁵ At the end of Johnson's administration and at the beginning of Nixon's, the US government did attempt to turn the tide of growing international monetary instability, through fiscal austerity and tight monetary policies. Soon, however,

the political costs of sustaining a serious anti-inflationary policy—not to mention the alarming fall in the stock market . . . proved unacceptable to the Nixon Administration. Well before the defeat of the Republicans in the congressional elections of November 1970, and as high interest rates threatened to choke off the recovery, the government turned once again to fiscal stimulus and the Fed accommodated with a policy of easy credit. As Nixon was to put it several months later, 'We are all Keynesians now'.¹⁶

The US turn to macroeconomic expansionary policies in mid-1970 sounded the death knell for the gold-dollar standard. As interest rates

¹⁴ GT, pp. 93–94; BB, pp. 17–18.

¹⁵ GT, pp. 94, 116, 119, 126–30.

¹⁶ GT, pp. 120–21.

fell in the United States, while remaining high or increasing in Europe and Japan, short-term speculative money fled the dollar, sending the US balance-of-payments deficit (short and long term) through the roof. The half-hearted attempt of the Smithsonian Agreement of December 1971 to preserve fixed exchange rates through a 7.9 per cent devaluation of the dollar against gold, and a revaluation of the mark by 13.5 per cent and of the yen by 16.9 per cent against the dollar, failed to contain the renewed downward pressure that the Nixon administration put on the US currency through yet another round of economic stimulus. By 1973, the pressure became unbearable, resulting in a further major devaluation of the dollar and the formal abandonment of the fixed-rate system of exchange in favour of the float.¹⁷

The massive devaluation of the dollar against the mark (by a total of 50 per cent, between 1969 and 1973) and the yen (by a total 28.2 per cent, from 1971 to 1973)—Brenner claims—secured ‘the kind of turnaround in relative costs that [the US manufacturing sector] had been unable to achieve by way of productivity growth and wage restraint’. The turnaround had a galvanizing effect on the US economy. Profitability, investment growth and labour productivity in manufacturing staged a comeback, and the US trade balance was restored to a surplus. The impact on the German and Japanese economies was just the opposite. The competitiveness of their manufacturers was sharply curtailed, making it their turn ‘to forego their high rates of return if they wished to maintain their sales’. The world crisis of profitability had not been overcome. But its burden was now more evenly shared among the chief capitalist countries.¹⁸

In sum, uneven economic development—understood as a process of successful catching up of laggard with leading economic powers—produced both the long postwar boom and the crisis of profitability of the late 1960s and early 1970s. As long as the catching up was going on, it sustained a worldwide virtuous circle of high profits, high investments and increasing productivity. But once the laggards—or at least two of the most sizeable ones—had actually caught up with the former leader, the result was a worldwide glut of productive capacity and a consequent downward pressure on rates of profit. Soon, however, a massive, government-supported devaluation of the dollar against the mark and

¹⁷ GT, pp. 120–23.

¹⁸ GT, pp. 123–24, 137.

the yen distributed the fall in profitability more evenly among the three main capitalist powers.

Over-capacity and persistent stagnation

Uneven development generated the excess capacity that provoked the general fall in the rate of profit between 1965 and 1973. But it was the failure of capitalist enterprises and governments to restore profitability to its previous levels through the elimination of excess capacity that was primarily responsible for the persistence of comparative stagnation over the two decades from 1973 to 1993. In Brenner's conceptualization, there is 'over-capacity and over-production' (two terms he always uses together) when 'there is insufficient demand to allow higher-cost firms to maintain their former rates of profit'. These firms are thus 'obliged to cease using some of their means of production and can make use of the rest only by lowering their prices and thus their profitability. There is over-capacity and over-production, *with respect to the hitherto-existing profit rate*'.¹⁹ Either the over-supply of productive capacity is eliminated, or the rate of profit must fall, with all the dire consequences that such a fall entails in a capitalist economy, from drops in the rates of investment and productivity growth to the decline of real wages and levels of employment. Brenner's contention is that, at least up to 1993, the over-supply of productive capacity that underlay the crisis of profitability of 1965-73, far from being eliminated, if anything increased further, continually depressing profitability.

The contention is based on two lines of argument, one concerning capitalist enterprises and one concerning governments. In Brenner's conceptualization of world capitalism, there is no spontaneous market mechanism that will prevent over-capacity from developing in a large number of industries, or from becoming a chronic feature of the world economy once it has developed. Higher-cost incumbent firms have both

¹⁹ GT, pp. 25-6; emphasis in original. As noted, Brenner invariably uses the terms 'over-capacity' and 'over-production' together, occasionally replacing them with the term 'over-accumulation' (e.g. BA, pp. 32, 159). In my view, what he is describing is a crisis of over-accumulation, of which over-capacity and over-production are distinct manifestations. As we shall see in the second part of this paper, the fact that Brenner never clarifies conceptually the difference between over-capacity and over-production creates considerable difficulties in empirically assessing their actual importance, both in absolute terms and relative to other manifestations of the underlying crisis of over-accumulation.

the means and the incentive to resist exit from overcrowded industries, while over-capacity and falling profits do not necessarily discourage new entry. Higher-cost incumbents resist exit because many of their tangible and intangible assets 'can be realized only in their established lines of production and would be lost were [the incumbents] to switch lines'. Moreover, 'the slowed growth of demand which is the unavoidable expression of the reduced growth of investment and wages that inevitably results from falling profit rates, makes it increasingly difficult to reallocate to new lines'. These firms, therefore, 'have every reason to defend their markets [by seeking the average rate of return on their circulating costs only] and to counterattack by speeding up the process of innovation, through investment in additional fixed capital'. The adoption of such a strategy, in turn, 'will tend to provoke the original cost-reducing innovators to accelerate technical change themselves, further worsening the already existing over-capacity and over-production'.²⁰

At the same time, the aggravation of over-capacity does not deter new entry and a consequent further downward pressure on the rate of profit. 'On the contrary. The initial fall in profitability . . . can be expected to intensify the world-wide drive for even lower production costs, through the combination of even cheaper labour with even higher levels of techniques in still later-developing regions'.²¹ The most conspicuous instance of such new entry during the long downturn were producers based in so-called Less Developed Countries—especially in East Asia, but also Mexico and Brazil—who managed to make significant inroads in world markets for manufactured goods, further intensifying the downward pressure on prices and profitability. 'There was, in short, not only too little exit, but too much entry'.²²

This first line of argument is, for the most part, developed deductively on the basis of circumstantial evidence. There is very little business history proper in either 'Global Turbulence' or *The Boom and the Bubble*. In both texts, the bulk of the empirical evidence and historical narrative concerns the second line of argument, according to which the governments of the main capitalist powers, especially the United States, share responsibility for aggravating rather than alleviating the market tendency towards too little exit and too much entry. In this respect, Brenner's main contribution to our understanding of the long downturn is to show that the

²⁰ GT, pp. 32–33.

²¹ GT, p. 34.

²² BB, pp. 26, 31, 37.

governments in question acted not so much as regulators—though they did that too—but as active participants, even protagonists, of the system-wide competitive struggle that has set capitalists against one another since the late 1960s.

State interventions

As previously noted, in his account of the 1960s crisis of profitability Brenner already saw the US government's pursuit of a major devaluation of the dollar against the mark and yen as making a decisive contribution to shifting the burden of the crisis from American to German and Japanese manufacturers. Similarly, in his account of the long downturn, Brenner shows how the ebb and flow of currency devaluations and revaluations have been key instruments of governmental action in the inter-capitalist competitive struggle. These are marked by three major political-economic turning points: the Reagan–Thatcher monetarist 'revolution' of 1979–80, which reversed the devaluation of the US dollar of the 1970s; the Plaza Accord of 1985, which resumed the dollar devaluation; and the so-called 'reverse Plaza Accord' of 1995, which again reversed the devaluation. Let us briefly examine Brenner's account of the relationship between these turning points and the persistence of over-production and over-capacity in manufacturing, which underlies his long downturn.

By the late 1970s, the US macro-policy of Federal deficits, extreme monetary ease and 'benign neglect' with respect to the dollar's exchange rate reached the limit of its ability to sustain economic expansion and restore American manufacturing competitiveness and profitability. The policy had 'enabled the advanced capitalist economies to transcend the oil crisis recession of 1974–5 and to continue to expand during the remainder of the decade'. Nevertheless, in their effects 'Keynesian stimuli proved to be profoundly ambivalent'. While sustaining the growth of demand domestically and internationally, 'Keynesian remedies helped to perpetuate over-capacity and over-production, preventing the harsh medicine of shakeout, indeed depression, that historically had cleared the way for new upturns [in profitability]'. Reduced profitability, in turn, made firms 'unable and unwilling . . . to bring about as great an increase in supply as in the past when profit rates were higher . . . with the result that the ever-increasing public deficits of the 1970s brought about not so much increases in *output* as rises in *prices*'. The escalation in

inflationary pressures was accompanied by record-breaking deficits in the US balance of payments. By 1977–78 these deficits ‘precipitated a devastating run on the US currency that threatened the dollar’s position as an international reserve currency, [clearing the path] for a major change of perspective’.²³

The change came with the Reagan–Thatcher monetarist revolution of 1979–80. According to Brenner, its main objective was to revive profitability, not just or even primarily in manufacturing, but in the low-productivity service sector and, especially, in the domestic and international financial sectors, through reduced corporate taxation, increased unemployment and the elimination of capital controls. Unlike earlier, Keynesian solutions, however, monetarist remedies sought to restore profitability by administering the harsh medicine of shakeout. Unprecedentedly tight credit provoked ‘a purge of that great ledge of high-cost, low-profit manufacturing firms that had been sustained by the Keynesian expansion of credit’. Although inflationary pressures were rapidly brought under control, record-high US real interest rates and the rising dollar associated with them ‘threatened to precipitate a worldwide crash, starting in the US’.²⁴

The crash was avoided by the ‘fortuitous’ return of Keynesianism—with a vengeance. Reagan’s ‘monumental programme of military spending

²³ BB, pp. 33–34; emphasis in original. Brenner’s account of the sequence of events that led to the monetarist revolution (or counterrevolution, as I prefer to characterize it) is the weakest link in his story of the long downturn. For one thing, he leaves us wondering why, under conditions of over-capacity and over-production, Keynesian stimuli brought about increases in prices rather than output; and, once this had occurred, why price increases did not result in higher rates of profit. More important, in *The Boom and the Bubble*, he does not tell us how and why policies ‘designed to restore US manufacturing competitiveness’ resulted instead in record-breaking trade deficits, despite a simultaneous escalation in protectionist measures (the Multi-Fiber Arrangement of 1973, the Trade Act of 1974 against ‘unfair trade’, and the tightening of so-called ‘voluntary export restraints’ imposed on East Asian countries). In his earlier text, he suggests three reasons for this perverse outcome: a US macroeconomic policy ‘more stimulative than that of its chief rivals’; a slower growth of US labour productivity; and an apparently greater ‘tolerance of rival capitalists abroad for reduced profitability’ (GT, pp. 179–80). Nevertheless, these are *ad hoc* explanations which do not clearly fit his ‘too-little-exit, too-much-entry’ thesis and, as we shall see in the second and third parts of this article, miss the most fundamental causes of the devastating run on the dollar of 1979–80.

²⁴ BB, pp. 35–36.

and tax reduction for the rich . . . partly offset the ravages of monetarist tight credit and kept the economy ticking over'. Reaganite policies did, of course, bring back current-account deficits, also with a vengeance, especially 'since, from this point onward, most of the rest of the world increasingly eschewed Keynesian public deficits'. As in the 1970s, unprecedented deficits provided 'the injections of demand that were needed . . . to pull the world economy out of the recession of 1979–82'. In contrast to the 1970s, however, even larger US deficits did not now provoke a run on the dollar. On the contrary, the pull of extremely high real interest rates and a push from the Japanese Ministry of Finance resulted in a massive inflow of capital into the United States from all over the world, leading not to a depreciation but to a sharp appreciation of the US currency.⁵⁵

Plaza Accord

The synergy of reduced inflationary pressures, high real interest rates, massive inflows of capital and a rising dollar was in keeping with the Reagan administration's objective of strengthening US finance capital. It nonetheless 'proved catastrophic for large sections of US manufacturing'. Under strong pressure from Congress and many of the country's leading corporate executives, the Reagan administration 'had little choice but to undertake an epoch-making reversal of direction'. The centrepiece of this reversal was the Plaza Accord of September 22, 1985, whereby the G-5 powers, under US pressure, agreed to take joint action to help American manufacturers by reducing the exchange rate of the dollar. The very next day, the Accord was complemented by stepped-up US denunciations of the 'unfair' trading practices of other countries. The denunciations soon escalated into threats, supported by new legislation—most notably, the Omnibus Trade and Competition Act of 1988 and the Structural Impediments Act of 1989—to close off the US market to leading (mostly East Asian) foreign competitors. This was 'a bludgeon both to limit their imports'—through 'voluntary export restraints'—'and to force the opening of their markets to US exports and foreign direct investment'.⁵⁶

In seeking a radical devaluation of the dollar while simultaneously stepping up protectionist and 'market-opening' measures, the Reagan administration was following in the footsteps of Nixon, Ford and Carter.

⁵⁵ BB, pp. 36, 54–55.

⁵⁶ BB, pp. 54, 59–60.

The outcome of these initiatives in the 1980s and early 1990s was nonetheless quite different to that of the 1970s.

The Plaza Accord, and its sequels, proved to be the turning point in the US manufacturing turnaround, and a major watershed for the world economy as a whole. It set off ten years of more or less continuous, and major, devaluation of the dollar with respect to the yen and the mark, which was accompanied by a decade-long freeze on real wage growth. It thereby opened the way simultaneously for the recovery of competitiveness, along with the speed-up of export growth, of US manufacturing; a secular crisis of German and Japanese industry; and an unprecedented explosion of export-based manufacturing expansion throughout East Asia, where economies for the most part tied their currencies to the dollar and thereby secured for their manufacturing exporters a major competitive advantage vis-à-vis their Japanese rivals when the dollar fell between 1985 and 1995.²⁷

By 1993, the tendencies set off by the Plaza Accord, along with the prior shakeout of the US industrial structure provoked by the unprecedentedly tight credit of the early 1980s, resulted in a revival of US profitability, investment and production.²⁸ To paraphrase Veblen, the remedies concocted by the government to cure the 'malady of the affections' of US business seemed, at long last, to have reached the emotional seat of the trouble and restored profits to a 'reasonable' rate. The cure, however, had some serious side effects.

In Brenner's view, the main problem was that the US revival had occurred primarily at the expense of its Japanese and Western European rivals and had done little to overcome the underlying over-capacity and over-production in manufacturing which haunted the global economy. This zero-sum nature of the revival was problematic for the United States itself. For one thing, 'the ever slower growth of world demand, and in particular the related intensification of international competition in manufacturing' limited the revival there, too. More compellingly, the United States could hardly afford 'a truly serious crisis of its leading partners and rivals', especially Japan.²⁹

This contradiction surfaced starkly in the wake of the Mexican peso crisis of 1994–95. The crisis, and Washington's rescue of the Mexican economy, led to a new run on the dollar, sharply accentuating its downward trend of the preceding decade. With the yen reaching an all-time

²⁷ BB, pp. 60–61.

²⁸ BB, p. 89–93.

²⁹ BB, p. 127.

high of ¥79:\$1 in April 1995, 'Japanese producers could not even cover their variable costs and . . . the Japanese growth machine appeared to be grinding to a halt'. Still under the shock of the Mexican collapse and its disastrous impact on international financial stability (and with the upcoming 1996 presidential election looming in the background), the Clinton administration simply could not risk a Japanese version of the Mexican debacle.

Even if a Japanese crisis could be contained, it would probably entail the large-scale liquidation of Japan's enormous holdings of US assets, especially Treasury Bonds. Such a development would chase up interest rates, frighten the money markets, and possibly [threaten] a recession at the very moment that the US economy appeared finally ready to right itself.³⁰

Led by Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, the United States entered into an arrangement with Germany and Japan to take joint action aimed at reversing the upward trend of the yen and the downward trend of the dollar. This double reversal was to be achieved by a further lowering of interest rates in Japan, relative to those of the United States, and by substantially enlarging Japanese purchases of dollar-denominated instruments such as Treasury bonds, as well as German and US purchases of dollars in currency markets. Later called the 'reverse Plaza Accord', the agreement represented 'a stunning—and entirely unexpected—about-face in the policy stance of both the US and its main allies and rivals, in much the same way as had the original Plaza Accord of 1985'.³¹

Through this volte-face, the governments of the world's largest economies switched roles in their minuet of mutual help. 'Just as Japan and Germany had had to accede to the Plaza Accord . . . to rescue US manufacturing from its crisis of the first half of the 1980s, at great cost to themselves, so the US [was now] obliged to accept a quite similar bailout of Japan's crisis-bound manufacturing sector—again with epoch-making results'.³² For the switch transformed the ongoing US economic revival into the boom and bubble of the second half of the 1990s—the subject matter of Brenner's third main contention, to which we now turn.

Unsustainable revival

Brenner's argument on the precariousness of the economic revival of the 1990s is more difficult to pin down than his contentions concerning the

³⁰ BB, p. 130–31.

³¹ BB, p. 131.

³² BB, p. 127.

crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the persistence of relative stagnation from 1973 to 1993. The difficulty arises from the presence of two overlapping arguments: one involving the nature of the revival, before the full dilation of the 'new economy' bubble; and the other, the impact of the bubble on the revival. Let us examine each argument in turn.

In his 'Economics of Global Turbulence', written before equity prices went through the roof at the end of the 1990s, Brenner expressed serious doubts about whether the ongoing revivals of the US and world economies constituted 'a definitive transcendence of the long downturn'. He found little evidence of the kind of system-wide recovery of profitability that would have signalled 'the overcoming of the secular problem of manufacturing over-capacity and over-production'. He did acknowledge that, in the wake of the 'reverse Plaza Accord', the United States had experienced an export-led boom which contributed substantially to setting off more robust export growth in both Europe and Japan. This tendency 'held out the possibility that the advanced capitalist economies are finally ready to follow a Smithian recipe of mutually self-reinforcing growth through specialization and the gains from trade'. He nonetheless went on to argue that the outbreak of the East Asian crisis of 1997–98 demonstrated the persistence, or even a strengthening, of the tendency towards over-production and over-capacity.³³

Brenner also mentioned the possible emergence of another 'optimistic' scenario, whereby

the flood of low-priced goods coming from Japan and the rest of Asia would mainly serve . . . not so much to force down US producers' prices and profits as to reduce their production costs, enhancing their competitiveness, increasing their markups and stimulating further capital accumulation. They would, by the same token, revive the local economies, making possible the greater absorption of US imports. Complementarity would, in other words, override competition, setting off a virtuous upward spiral, with the US pulling along the world economy toward a new boom.³⁴

On balance, however, Brenner was sceptical about the likelihood that this alternative scenario could actually materialize. Rather, he expected world exports to grow more rapidly than world markets, perpetuating and exacerbating the longer-term trend towards over-capacity and

³³ *GT*, pp. 251, 255, 257–61.

³⁴ *GT*, p. 261.

over-production. In particular, he found it hard to believe that the radical devaluation of Asian currencies—especially that of the yen, by some 40 per cent since 1995—would not exercise an excruciating downward pressure on US manufacturers' prices and profits.

In this more probable scenario, redundant production would yet again undermine the gains from trade *and competition would end up trumping complementarity*. The accelerating supply of world exports in the face of shrinking markets, far from fuelling US profits and sustaining the boom, would undercut them and thereby the recovery, in this way cutting short a system-wide secular upturn and risking a serious new turn downward of the world economy.²⁵

In the two years following the publication of 'Global Turbulence', skyrocketing US equity prices and a prompt recovery of the world economy from the East Asian crisis might have seemed to invalidate this pessimistic conclusion. Although the 'new economy' bubble had already burst and much of the hype surrounding the sharp US economic upturn of the 1990s had waned before *The Boom and the Bubble* was completed, two questions remained open: first, how did the bubble fit in the scheme of things laid out in 'Global Turbulence'? And second, how did its occurrence affect Brenner's expectations for the future of the US and world economies?

In answer to the first question, Brenner has no difficulty in explaining the bubble in terms of the unintended, but certainly not unwelcome, effects of the 'reverse Plaza Accord' on the one side, and the Federal Reserve's purposeful nurturing of rising equity prices on the other. Even before 1995, the recovery of profitability in US manufacturing had translated into an increase in stock prices. The 'reverse Plaza Accord' amplified this increase for foreign investors by pushing up the value of the dollar. More important, the Accord 'unleashed a torrent of cash from Japan, East Asia and overseas more generally into US financial markets, which sharply eased interest rates and opened the way for a mighty increase in corporate borrowing to finance the purchase of shares on the stock market'. Crucial in this respect were Japanese policies. Not only did the Tokyo authorities directly pump money into US government securities and the dollar, and encourage Japanese insurance companies to follow suit by loosening regulations on overseas investment. In addition,

²⁵ *GT*, p. 262; emphasis in original.

by slashing the official discount rate to 0.5 per cent, they enabled investors—including, above all, US investors—to borrow yen in Japan almost for free, convert them into dollars and invest them elsewhere, especially in the US stock market.³⁶

This flood of US-bound foreign capital and the associated appreciation of the dollar were essential ingredients in the transformation of the pre-1995 boom in equity prices into the subsequent bubble. In Brenner's account, however, the transformation would probably not have occurred without the encouragement of the Fed. Despite his famous December 1996 warning about the stock market's 'irrational exuberance', Greenspan 'did nothing to indicate by his actions any serious worry about orbiting equity prices'. On the contrary, while steadily expanding the domestic money supply, he did not raise interest rates significantly or impose greater reserve requirements on banks; nor did he raise margin requirements on equity purchases. Worse still, as the bubble gained momentum, Greenspan went much further.

By spring 1998, he would be explicitly rationalizing tearaway equity prices in terms of 'New Economy' productivity gains which he saw as at once keeping down inflation and giving credence to investors' expectations of the 'extraordinary growth of profits into the distant future'. He would also be expressing his warm appreciation of the stepped-up corporate investment and household consumption that flowed from the wealth effect of exploding asset values, and which strengthened the boom. . . . Equity speculators could hardly be faulted if they drew the conclusion that the Fed Chairman, despite his professed caution, found their exuberance not just not irrational, but also sensible and beneficial.³⁷

The inrush of capital unleashed by the 'reverse Plaza Accord' and the Fed's easy credit regime were necessary conditions of the equity-market bubble. But 'the main active force' in its dilation were US non-financial corporations, which exploited these conditions to 'ratchet up their borrowing for the purpose of buying shares in colossal quantities—either to accomplish mergers and acquisitions or to simply re-purchase (retire) their own outstanding equities'. Entering upon 'the greatest wave of accumulation of debt in their history', US corporations pumped up share values at unprecedented rates. 'Since rising equity prices, by providing growing paper assets and thereby increased collateral, facilitated

³⁶ BB, pp. 139–41.

³⁷ BB, pp. 143–6.

still further borrowing, the bubble was enabled to sustain itself, as well as to fuel the strong cyclical upturn already in progress'.³⁸

Impact of the bubble

This brings us to our second question. How did the bubble affect the revival already in progress? Did it change the conditions of the upturn to render more probable the emergence of one of the 'optimistic' scenarios about which Brenner had been so sceptical in 'Global Turbulence'? Brenner's answer is that, by further increasing international over-capacity and over-production, the bubble made any such outcome even less likely. The inflation of the paper value of their assets, and the bubble-induced 'wealth effect' on consumer demand, led corporations to invest well above what was warranted by their actually realized profits. As a result, as soon as the wealth effect ceased to subsidize productivity growth, investment and consumer demand, 'firms . . . were bound to suffer truly excruciating downward pressure on their rates of return'. Indeed, writing in mid-2001, Brenner already observed the initial impact on the US and world economies of the burst bubble and 'the huge glut of productive capacity left in its wake'—most notably, a disastrous decline in the non-financial corporate profit rate, which wiped out 'virtually all of the gains in profitability achieved in the expansion of the 1990s'; and a sharp contraction in capital accumulation.³⁹

In speculating on how serious the ensuing downturn would be, Brenner reaches essentially the same conclusions he had come to four years earlier in 'Global Turbulence'. He points out that the 'underlying question' is still 'whether the big recessions and crises . . . that had punctuated the 1990s, as well as the rise of new industries all across the advanced capitalist world, had finally rid international manufacturing of its tendency to redundant production and made for the . . . increase in complementarity' that was required 'to finally support a dynamic international expansion'. On balance, he again finds that no such shakeout had actually occurred. On the contrary, in his judgement the bursting of the bubble left the US economy 'weighed down by many of the same stagnationist forces that held back the Japanese economy at the end of its bubble'—that is, 'both the downward spiral set off by the bubble-in-reverse *and* an international manufacturing sector still

³⁸ BB, pp. 146–7, 151–2.

³⁹ BB, pp. 209–17, 248–53, 261–64.

constrained by over-capacity and over-production'. Although the US may be in a position to avoid the banking crisis that has crippled Japan, it nonetheless lacks 'the enormous savings and current-account surpluses that have enabled Japan—so far—to muddle through'. It is therefore vulnerable, not just to the 'destructive reductions in demand' that would ensue from attempts to reduce the huge indebtedness of US corporations and households, but also to the possibility of withdrawals of foreign investment and consequent runs on the dollar.⁴⁰

Under these circumstances, the United States is more likely to lead the world economy into a self-reinforcing recession than a recovery. In a sense, such a recession would constitute a 'continuation of the international crisis of 1997–98, which was temporarily postponed by the last phase of the US stock market run-up but never fully resolved'. As in that earlier crisis, 'East Asia will once again prove the world's powder keg', with massive over-capacity in Japan and elsewhere in the region exercising a strong downward pressure on profitability, locally and globally.⁴¹ Prudently, Brenner does not commit himself to any particular scenario. But the overwhelming impression with which we are left is that the long downturn is far from over; indeed, that the worst is yet to come.

II. LONG DOWNTURN IN WORLD-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

We are all in debt to Brenner for providing a systematic analysis of global turbulence which contrasts sharply with the prevailing immediacy and superficiality of existing accounts of the relationship between the United States and the world economy over the past half-century. I cannot think of a better starting point from which to unravel the complexities of that relationship. At the same time, we should not be surprised if an analysis of this scope raises more questions than it can resolve. Let us see what these questions are and in which directions we should look in order to provide some answers.

The central thesis underlying all Brenner's contentions is that the persistence of relative stagnation in the world economy at large over the last thirty years has been due to 'too little exit' and 'too much entry'—too

⁴⁰ BB, pp. 269, 276, 277–78; emphasis in original.

⁴¹ BB, pp. 278–82.

little and too much, that is, relative to what would be required in order to restore profitability in manufacturing to the level it had attained during the long boom of the 1950s and 1960s. As we have seen, Brenner traces this tendency to the mutually reinforcing action of the behaviour of higher-cost incumbent firms and the policies of the governments of the world's three largest economies. As a result of this combination, each of these three, and the world economy at large, were prevented 'from purging superfluous, high-cost means of production by the *standard capitalist methods* of bankruptcy, downsizing, and layoffs'.

Higher cost/lower profit firms were thus able to long occupy economic positions that could, in the abstract, eventually have been assumed by more productive, higher profit, and more dynamic enterprises. But allowing the less productive, less profitable firms to go out of business by *letting the business cycle take its natural course* would very likely have turned the long downturn, with its relatively serious but nonetheless limited recessions, into *outright depression*. Simply put, the precondition for restoring the system to health was a debt-deflation, leading to what Marx called 'a slaughtering of capital values'. But since the only systematic way to achieve this was through depression, the only real alternative was continuing debt expansion, which contributed both to stagnation and financial instability.⁴²

In his account of the long downturn, Brenner mentions two moments when the 'standard' capitalist method of structural shakeout was briefly at work: the early 1980s, under Reagan, and the mid-1990s, under Clinton. But as soon as the shakeout threatened to trigger a system-wide depression, the concerted action of the main capitalist states cut short the 'slaughter of capital values' through an expansion of public and private debt. 'But while the growth of debt . . . was helping to stave off depression, it was also slowing down that recovery of profitability which was the fundamental condition for economic revitalization'.⁴³

Brenner never tells us what a 'depression'—as opposed to the 'comparative stagnation' of the long downturn—would look like. In the passages just quoted, the context suggests that it would be a far more destructive occurrence. But the difference is never made explicit, leaving us wondering, first, whether world capitalism has ever actually experienced this allegedly 'classical', 'natural', 'standard' shakeout and outright depression; second, if it did, what alteration in historical conditions has enabled contemporary capitalism to avoid the same experience; and finally, what

⁴² BB, p. 113; GT, p. 152; emphases added.

⁴³ GT, pp. 151–2.

are the implications of this change for the future of world capitalism and world society?

Two long downturns compared

In seeking answers to such questions, it is helpful to compare the sketch of the great depression of 1873–96, set out at the beginning of this article, with Brenner's account of the long downturn or persistent stagnation of 1973–93. Notwithstanding the widespread designation of the earlier period as a *depression*, such a comparison immediately reveals striking similarities.⁴⁴ Both were lengthy periods of reduced profitability; both were characterized by a system-wide intensification of competitive pressures on capitalist enterprise; and both were preceded by an exceptionally sustained and profitable expansion of world trade and production. Moreover, in both periods the crisis of profitability and the intensification of competition sprang from the same sources as the preceding expansion: the successful 'catching up' by laggard countries with developmental achievements previously 'monopolized' by a leading country. Once we substitute the United Kingdom for the United States as the leading country, and the US and Germany for Germany and Japan as the laggards, Brenner's interpretation of the late-twentieth-century long downturn can equally well be applied to that of the late nineteenth century.

Differences between the two long downturns were, in key respects, even more important than similarities, as we shall see. Yet, faced with a situation of intensifying competition comparable to that of the late twentieth century, world capitalism in the late nineteenth century experienced relative stagnation for more than twenty years—with plenty of local or short-lived crises and recessions, but without the kind of system-wide shakeout which, according to Brenner, is the standard capitalist method of restoring profitability. In manufacturing, in particular, there continued to be 'too much entry' and 'too little exit', as well as major technological

⁴⁴ As noted earlier, the great depression of 1873–96 has been called a 'myth' precisely because it was characterized by a slowdown in the rate of growth rather than a collapse of production, trade and investment, as in the truly 'great depression' of the 1930s. But in the 1870s and 1880s profitability did collapse and remained depressed through the early 1890s. Brenner does not deal with the semantic ambiguity of 'depression' but it is clearly an issue that must be confronted to make sense of his frequent use of the term.

and organizational innovations which intensified rather than alleviated competitive pressures system-wide.⁴⁵ And yet, in spite of the absence of a system-wide shakeout, in the closing years of the century profitability was restored, generating the upturn of the Edwardian *belle époque*.

As argued in detail elsewhere, and further specified in a later section of this article, this upturn can be traced to a response to system-wide intensifications of competition that has characterized world capitalism from its earliest, pre-industrial beginnings right up to the present. This response consists of a system-wide tendency, centred on the leading capitalist economy of the epoch, towards the 'financialization' of processes of capital accumulation. Integral to the transformation of inter-capitalist competition from a positive- into a negative-sum game, this tendency has also acted as a key mechanism for restoring profitability, at least temporarily, in the declining but still hegemonic centres of world capitalism. From this standpoint we can detect resemblances, not just between the great depression of 1873–96 and the long downturn of 1973–93, but also between the Edwardian *belle époque* and the US economic revival and great euphoria of the 1990s.⁴⁶

While a verdict on the eventual outcome of the 1990s revival might be premature, we know that the Edwardian *belle époque* ended in the

⁴⁵ The long downturn of the late 19th century witnessed not just the beginning of the 'Second Industrial Revolution' but also the emergence in the US of the modern multi-unit, vertically integrated enterprise, which became the dominant model over the next century. 'Almost nonexistent at the end of the 1870s, these integrated enterprises came to dominate many of the [US's] most vital industries within less than three decades': Alfred Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*, Cambridge, MA 1977, p. 285. It is interesting to notice that the notion of 'excessive competition', which surfaced in Japan during the crisis of profitability of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and which Brenner occasionally uses to characterize the underlying condition of the long downturn of 1973–93, first gained currency in business circles in the late 19th century downturn, especially in the US. See Terutomo Ozawa, *Multinationalism, Japanese Style: The Political Economy of Outward Dependency*, Princeton 1979, pp. 66–7; Veblen, *Theory of Business Enterprise*, p. 216; and Martin Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890–1916: The Market, the Law and Politics*, Cambridge 1988, pp. 53–56.

⁴⁶ See my *The Long Twentieth Century*, London 1994; Arrighi and Beverly Silver, *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System*, Minneapolis 1999; and Arrighi and Beverly Silver, 'Capitalism and World (Dis)Order', *Review of International Studies*, 27 (2001).

catastrophes of two world wars and the intervening global economic crash of the 1930s. This collapse is, in fact, the only occurrence of the last century and a half that corresponds to Brenner's image of a system-wide shakeout or 'outright depression'. If this is indeed what is signified by Brenner's image, we must conclude that such a shakeout appears to have been an exceptional occurrence rather than the 'standard' or 'natural' capitalist method of restoring profitability. What has recurred thus far is the tendency for uneven development, in Brenner's sense, to generate a long boom, followed by a long period of intensifying competition, reduced profitability and comparative stagnation; itself followed by an upturn of profitability, based on a financial expansion centred on the epoch's leading economy. The one and only systemic breakdown of the last 150 years has occurred in the transition from the first to the second round of uneven development.

Contrasted trajectories

The question then arises of whether a comparable breakdown is now in the making, and whether such an occurrence is as 'fundamental' a condition for the revitalization of the global economy as Brenner seems to think. In order to answer this question, we must highlight not just the similarities but also the differences between the two long downturns—which are, indeed, equally striking. Although both downturns were characterized by an escalation of competitive struggles, these unfolded along radically different paths. As previously noted, in 1873–96 the main form of inter-enterprise competition was a 'price war', resulting in 'the most drastic deflation in the memory of man'. Closely related to this tendency, the governments of the main capitalist countries subjected their currencies to the self-regulating mechanisms of a metallic standard, thereby surrendering devaluation and revaluation as a means of competitive struggle.

Increasingly, however, governments became active supporters of their domestic industries through protectionist and mercantilist practices, including the construction of overseas colonial empires—thereby undermining the unity of the world market. Although Britain continued to practice free trade unilaterally, it also remained in the vanguard of territorial expansion and empire building overseas. From the 1880s, this trajectory of intensifying interstate competition in overseas-empire building translated into the escalation of the armaments race among rising and

declining capitalist powers, which eventually came to a head in the First World War. Although Britain was an active participant in this scramble, it continued to provide the world economy with capital through two major waves of overseas investment—in the 1880s and in the 1900s—which included pouring significant funds into the United States.

In all these respects, the competitive struggle during the late twentieth century's long downturn unfolded along a radically different path. During the 1970s, in particular, commodity prices generally rose rather than fell, in what was probably one of the greatest system-wide inflations in a time of peace. Although inflationary pressures were contained in the 1980s and 1990s, prices continued to rise throughout the downturn. At its outset, the last tenuous link between monetary circulation and a metallic standard—the gold-dollar exchange rate established at Bretton Woods—was severed and never again restored. As Brenner underscores, the governments of the main capitalist countries were thus in a position to use the devaluation and revaluation of currencies as a means of competitive struggle. And while they did so systematically, they nonetheless continued to promote the integration of the world market through a series of negotiations which further liberalized global trade and investment, eventually resulting in the formation of the World Trade Organization.

Far from being undermined, the unity of the world market was thus further consolidated during this period. Nor was there any sign of an armament race among rising and declining capitalist powers. On the contrary, after the final escalation of the Cold War arms build-up in the 1980s, global military capabilities became even more centralized in the hands of the United States than they had been previously. At the same time, instead of providing capital to the rest of the world economy, as Britain had throughout the nineteenth-century downturn and financial expansion, since the 1980s the United States has been absorbing capital at historically unprecedented rates, as Brenner himself notes.

In all these respects, the trajectory of the competitive struggle in the latest long downturn differs radically from the previous one. How can we account for this combination of similarities and differences between the two, and what new light does this kind of comparison throw on Brenner's analysis of global turbulence over the last thirty years? In dealing with these issues, I will focus on the three main shortcomings

of Brenner's argument. The first concerns labour-capital relations; the second, so-called North-South relations; and the third, inter-capitalist competition itself. Let me deal with each in turn.



Outflanking labour resistance

In 'Global Turbulence' and, to a lesser extent, *The Boom and the Bubble*, Brenner presents his account of the long downturn as a critique of what he calls 'supply-side' theories of capitalist crises. Advanced in various forms by Left and Right alike, these contend that, by the 1960s, labour had acquired a leverage in the wealthier capitalist countries sufficient to squeeze profits and thereby undermine the mechanisms of capitalist accumulation. While acknowledging that labour may indeed be in such a position locally and temporarily, Brenner finds it inconceivable that it can wield the power necessary to provoke a long-term, system-wide downturn.

Labour cannot, as a rule, bring about a temporally extended, systemic downturn because, as a rule, what might be called the potential sphere of investment for capital in any line of production generally extends beyond the labour market that is affected by unions and/or political parties or is regulated by norms, values, and institutions supported by the state. So firms can generally circumvent and thereby undermine the institutionalized strength of workers at any given point by investing where workers lack the capacity to resist. Indeed, they must do so, or they will find themselves outflanked and competitively defeated by other capitalists who will.⁴⁷

It follows that, as Brenner puts it, 'vertical' pressure on capital, from below—that is, from labour—could not and did not bring about the spatially generalized and temporally extended squeeze on profits that underlies the long downturn. Only 'horizontal' pressure from inter-capitalist competition could do so.⁴⁸

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that there is in fact 'cheaper labour that can be combined with means of production embodying something like the current level of technology without loss of efficiency (that is, at lower unit cost)'. According to Brenner, this assumption

⁴⁷ GT, p. 20. Elsewhere Brenner mentions immigration—'unless . . . restrained by political means'—as another mechanism through which workers' power can be undermined (GT, p. 18). His overwhelming emphasis, however, is on the mobility of capital.

⁴⁸ GT, p. 23.

is justified for two reasons. First, 'labour forces in regions with long histories of economic development tend to receive wages that are substantially higher than can be explained simply by reference to their relative level of productiveness'; and second, 'over similarly extended time periods, technical change tends to reduce the skill required to produce any given array of products, with the result that the labour force that can make those products without loss of efficiency is continually enlarged, and the wage required to pay it correspondingly reduced'.⁴⁹

In short, for historical reasons which Brenner does not explore, labour forces in 'advanced' capitalist countries have secured rewards for effort far higher than warranted by their productivity. This in itself makes them vulnerable to the competition of labour forces that—for equally unexplored historical reasons—work for wages lower than their actual or potential productivity might warrant. At the same time, technical change continually enlarges this global pool of underpaid workers, or would-be workers, who can be mobilized to outflank the pressure on profitability coming from overpaid labour. The only pressure on profitability that capitalists cannot outflank is that which comes from the competition of other capitalists.

There are two main problems with this argument. Firstly, it would appear to be logically inconsistent since it claims that, in the past, workers in the 'advanced' capitalist countries had been able to gain greater rewards than warranted by their productivity, in contradiction to the theoretical claim that any attempt to do so would price them out of the world market. In addition, the argument overestimates the ease with which, in the present no less than in the past, cheaper labour supplies can be mobilized to outflank more expensive ones. Let us clarify these problems by looking once again at the historical record.

Horizontal vs vertical?

An analysis of the long downturn of 1873–96 provides strong evidence both for and against Brenner's thesis on the predominance of horizontal (inter-capitalist) over vertical (labour-capital) relations, in bringing about a long-term and generalized squeeze on profits. In support of Brenner's argument, it could be pointed out that intense labour-capital

⁴⁹ *GT*, p. 18.

conflicts—either in the form of sustained strike activity, as in Britain and the United States, or in the form of working-class party formation, as in Germany and elsewhere—*followed* rather than preceded the onset of the long downturn in profitability. There can be little doubt that intense inter-capitalist competition, in the form of a relentless price war, was the main, and prior, driving force for the substantial increase in real wages that occurred during the long downturn, especially in Britain. It is also plausible to assume that rising real wages at home were at least in part responsible for the explosive growth of British overseas investment in the 1880s. Brenner's argument for the late twentieth century thus fits key features of the late-nineteenth-century experience. The fit, however, is far from perfect.

Although inter-capitalist competition was undoubtedly the primary force squeezing profitability and pushing up real wages through drastic price deflation, did not workers' resistance in the form of increasing strike activity and class-based organization contribute in a major way to that outcome, by preventing nominal wages from decreasing as rapidly as prices? And did not this resistance itself affect the trajectory of inter-capitalist competition by strengthening the tendency, not just towards the export of capital from Britain and the import of labour to the United States, but also towards the 'politicization' of that competition, through a revival of neo-mercantilist practices and overseas empire-building on an unprecedented scale? Whatever the exact answer to these questions, Brenner's hard and fast distinction between horizontal and vertical conflicts, and his *a priori* exclusion of the latter as a possible contributing factor to general and persistent downturns in profitability, are ill-suited to unravel the complex historical interaction between the two kinds of conflicts.⁵⁰

Similarly, Brenner's contention concerning the inevitable outflanking of workers' leverage in core capitalist countries through international factor mobility ignores key aspects of how that mobility actually functioned during the earlier long downturn. Most of the capital exported from Britain and lesser core countries in this period did not involve a relocation of industrial production but the building of infrastructures in overseas territories, expanding demand for the output of British and

⁵⁰ See Beverly Silver, *Forces of Labour: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870*, Cambridge 2003, pp. 131–38, for one set of answers to these questions.

other metropolitan industries while increasing the supply of cheap raw materials and wage goods. Far from undermining the leverage of labour in the main capitalist centres, this pattern of overseas investment consolidated it. At the same time, while constant immigration may have helped contain the growing leverage of US labour, massive emigration—especially from Britain—surely helped the empowerment of European labour.⁵¹ All things considered, the persistence and generality of the late-nineteenth-century profit squeeze appear to have been due, not just to the intensification of inter-capitalist competition, but also to the effective resistance of workers against attempts to make them bear the costs of that competition; and to the difficulties which capitalists encountered in outflanking that resistance.

In the half-century following the end of the long downturn of 1873–96, inter-capitalist competition became increasingly politicized: literal wars among rising and declining capitalist powers, rather than price wars among capitalist enterprises, came to dominate the dynamics of horizontal and vertical conflicts alike. From the late 1890s until the First World War, this transformation was instrumental in reviving profitability. Eventually, however, it resulted in the breakdown of the UK-centred world market and a new and more vicious round of inter-imperialist conflicts. For all practical purposes, in the 1930s and 1940s there was no world market to speak of. In Eric Hobsbawm's words, world capitalism had retreated 'into the igloos of its nation-state economies and their associated empires'.⁵²

Labour–capital conflicts in the first half of the twentieth century developed along two distinct and increasingly divergent paths. One was the predominantly 'social' path of movements nesting at the point of production, whose main weapon of struggle was the disruptive power that mass production puts in the hands of strategically placed workers. This

⁵¹ As Göran Therborn notes, in the 19th century Europe in general, and Britain in particular, enjoyed practically unlimited migration outlets for its labour. 'Even the English centre of global industry was an out-migration area . . . A conservative estimate is that about 50 million Europeans emigrated out of the continent in the period 1850–1930, which corresponds to about 12 per cent of the continent's population in 1900': *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies, 1945–2000*, London 1995, p. 40.

⁵² Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge 1991, p. 132.

originated in late-nineteenth-century Britain but assumed almost ideal-typical form in the United States. The other was the predominantly 'political' path of those nesting in the bureaucratic structures of political parties, whose main weapon was the seizure of state power and the rapid industrialization and modernization of the states that fell under their control. This originated in Continental Europe, most notably in Germany, but assumed its ideal-typical form in the USSR.⁵³

The course of struggle along both paths was fundamentally shaped by the two world wars. Each of these was characterized by a similar pattern: overt labour militancy rose on the eve of both wars, declined temporarily during the conflicts themselves, and then exploded in their aftermath. The Russian Revolution took place during the First World War's wave of labour militancy, while that of the Second World War saw the spread of Communist regimes to Eastern Europe, China, North Korea and Vietnam. It was in this context of escalating labour militancy in the core, and advancing revolution in peripheral and semi-peripheral regions, that the social parameters of the US post-war world order were established.⁵⁴ Thus the form and intensity of inter-capitalist competition—that is, inter-imperialist rivalries and world wars—shaped the form and intensity of workers' struggles during this period. Nevertheless, the 'feedback' of these struggles on the trajectory of inter-capitalist conflicts was even more powerful in the first half of the twentieth century than it had been during the long downturn of 1873–96. Indeed, without such interaction, the establishment at the end of the Second World War of what Aristide Zolberg has called a 'labour friendly' international regime would be hard to explain.⁵⁵

⁵³ Arrighi and Beverly Silver, 'Labour Movements and Capital Migration: the US and Western Europe in World-Historical Perspective', in Charles Bergquist, ed., *Labour in the Capitalist World-Economy*, Beverly Hills 1984, pp. 183–216.

⁵⁴ Silver, *Forces of Labour*, pp. 125–31, 138–61.

⁵⁵ Aristide Zolberg, 'Response: Working-Class Dissolution', *International Labour and Working-Class History*, 47 (1995), pp. 28–38. To be sure, the 'labour friendly' reforms instituted with the establishment of US hegemony—e.g., macroeconomic policies favouring full employment—went hand-in-hand with fierce repression of any sectors of the labour movement that sought a deeper social transformation than the post-war social contract offered. Nevertheless, the reforms instituted under the pressure of escalating labour unrest and advancing communist revolution marked a significant transformation in comparison with the *laissez-faire* regime characteristic of the period of British world hegemony (Arrighi and Silver, *Chaos and Governance*, pp. 202–7; Silver, *Forces of Labour*, pp. 157–8).

Along with the US-sponsored reconstitution of the world market on new and more solid foundations, this regime created the institutional conditions for the system-wide revival of profitability that underlay the long boom of the 1950s and 1960s. I have no particular disagreement with Brenner's contention that 'uneven development', in his sense of the term, was a key determinant of the boom and of the long downturn that followed. But his insistence that labour-capital conflicts played no significant role in the extent, length and shape of this downturn seems even less warranted than for earlier comparable periods.

Class conflicts

Let us begin by noting that, in the late twentieth century, workers' struggles played a far more pro-active role vis-à-vis inter-capitalist competition than they did in the late nineteenth century. Whereas in the earlier period the intensification of labour-capital conflicts, and the most significant increases in real wages, *followed* the onset of the downturn, in the second half of the twentieth century they *preceded* it. In arguing his case against the role of workers' leverage in bringing about a system-wide and persistent squeeze on profits, Brenner focuses almost exclusively on the containment of workers' power in the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s: since this occurred before the crisis of profitability, he argues, the crisis could not be due to workers' pressures.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, this narrow focus on the single 'tree' of a short-term and local episode of class conflict prevents Brenner from seeing the 'forest' of the *multinational* rising tide of conflicts over wages and working conditions which, between 1968 and 1973, culminated in what E. H. Phelps Brown aptly called 'the pay explosion'.⁵⁷ Coming in the wake of twenty years of rising real wages in the core regions of the world economy, and at a time of intensifying inter-capitalist competition worldwide, this pay explosion did not merely exercise a system-wide downward pressure on profitability, as many have emphasized.⁵⁸ More

⁵⁶ GT, pp. 52-54, 58-63.

⁵⁷ E. H. Phelps Brown, 'A Non-Monetarist View of the Pay Explosion', *Three Banks Review*, no. 105 (1975), pp. 3-24.

⁵⁸ See, among others, Makoto Itoh, *The World Economic Crisis and Japanese Capitalism*, New York 1990, pp. 50-53; Philip Armstrong, Andrew Glyn and John Harrison, *Capitalism since World War II: The Making and Breakup of the Great Boom*, London 1984, pp. 269-76; and Philip Armstrong and Andrew Glyn, *Accumulation, Profits, State Spending: Data for Advanced Capitalist Countries 1952-83*, Oxford 1986.

important, it had a major and lasting impact on the subsequent trajectory of inter-capitalist competition.

This brings us to a second observation concerning differences between the two end-of-century long downturns. Although he occasionally mentions price inflation, Brenner is generally oblivious to the peculiarly inflationary character of the downturn he describes—all the more remarkable when contrasted with the strong deflation of the late nineteenth century. Brenner never questions this peculiarity; nor does he raise the closely related issue of why the 1965–73 crisis of profitability witnessed the severance of the last tenuous link between monetary circulation and a metallic standard, in sharp contrast with the tendency of the 1870s and 1880s towards the diffusion of the gold and other metallic-based regimes.

To be sure, Brenner does implicitly acknowledge that Washington's final abandonment, in 1970, of half-hearted attempts to stem the tide of speculation against the gold-dollar system was not just a ploy to shift the downward pressure on profits from American to Japanese and German manufacturers through a radical realignment of exchange rates. As he mentions in passing, 'the political costs of sustaining a serious anti-inflationary policy . . . quickly proved unacceptable to the Nixon administration'.⁵⁹ What these 'political costs' were, and whether they had anything to do with labour-capital relations, we are not told. As we shall see in the next section, in the case of the United States such costs were world-systemic as well as domestic. Nevertheless, even in the US—torn as it was by intense social conflicts over war in Vietnam and civil rights at home—the political price of subjecting monetary circulation to the discipline of a metallic standard clearly had a social component, including the risk of alienating labour from the ideologies and practices of the dominant bloc.⁶⁰

In fact, the most compelling evidence for the role played by labour leverage in the final demise of the gold standard comes, not from the United States, but from the country that had been the staunchest advocate of a return to a pure gold-based regime in the 1960s: De Gaulle's France. French advocacy of the gold standard ended abruptly, never to be revived again, in May 1968, when De Gaulle had to grant a huge wage-hike

⁵⁹ *GT*, pp. 120–21.

⁶⁰ Silver, *Forces of Labour*, pp. 161–63.

to prevent labour from siding with the rebellious students. Had monetary circulation been subject to the automatic mechanism of a metallic standard, such a wage-hike would have been impossible. Being perfectly aware of this, De Gaulle did what was necessary to restore social peace and stopped daydreaming about a return to gold.⁶¹

As the US and French experiences suggest, the leverage of labour during the transition from boom to relative stagnation in the late 1960s and early 1970s was not simply a reflection of inter-capitalist competition, as it largely had been at the onset of the late-nineteenth-century downturn.⁶² On the contrary, it was significant enough to make its own independent contribution, not just to the squeeze of profitability that underlay the transition, but also towards launching the downturn along an inflationary rather than deflationary path. This does not mean that inter-capitalist competition was not also at work in squeezing profits, nor that workers and their social power benefited from the inflationary nature of the downturn—they clearly did not. All it means is that Brenner's model—near-absolute predominance of inter-capitalist competition over labour-capital conflicts—fits the latest long downturn even less than it did the previous one.

Limits to capital migration

A closer examination of the effects of capital mobility on labour leverage provides further evidence for such an assessment. In the 1970s, in particular, there was indeed a strong tendency for capital, including industrial capital, to 'migrate' to lower-income, lower-wage countries. Nevertheless, as Beverly Silver has documented in great detail, the relocation of industrial activities from richer to poorer countries has more often than not led to the emergence of strong, new labour movements in the lower-wage sites of investment, rather than an unambiguous

⁶¹ Completely forgotten today, the connexion between the May events and the abrupt end of French advocacy of the gold standard was also little noticed at the time. I nonetheless remember quite vividly from newspaper accounts how May 1968 brought about a sudden reversal of French support for the gold standard as a means of challenging US dollar supremacy.

⁶² As previously noted, real wages rose throughout the great depression of 1873–96. Although by the 1880s and 1890s the increase could be attributed to workers' resistance against cuts in nominal wages, initially it was entirely due to inter-capitalist competition driving prices down more quickly than wages.

'race to the bottom'. Although corporations were initially attracted to Third World sites—Brazil, South Africa, South Korea—because they appeared to offer a cheap and docile labour force, the subsequent expansion of capital intensive, mass-production industries created new and militant working classes with significant disruptive power. This tendency was already in evidence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in textiles, the chief industry of British capitalism. But it has been far stronger in the leading industries of US capitalism, such as automobiles.⁶³

Thus, capitalist attempts to outflank labour pressures on profitability through industrial relocation tended to deprive capital of the considerable benefits associated with producing close to the wealthier markets and in safer political environments, without actually providing many of the expected benefits of abundant low-waged and easy-to-discipline labour supplies. Acting in conjunction with other factors that will be discussed in the next two sections, this tendency made its own contribution to the massive redirection of transnational capital flows in the 1980s, from low- and middle-income destinations to the United States. Again, I am not denying that industrial relocation helped to undermine workers' leverage in the countries that experienced the greatest net outflow of capital. I am simply saying that, generally speaking, it tended to backfire on profitability; and, in so far as the United States was concerned, the net outflow soon turned into a huge net inflow. If labour's leverage declined in the course of the long downturn, as it certainly did, capital mobility is not a very convincing explanation.

Labour migration does not provide a very plausible explanation either. It is true that labour migration over the last thirty years has come predominantly from poor countries, to a far greater extent than in the late nineteenth century—thereby constituting a greater competitive threat for workers in the wealthier industrial centres. Nevertheless, in the late twentieth century the capacity of workers in the richer countries

⁶³ Silver, *Forces of Labour*, especially chapters 2 and 3. Brenner and Silver both make use of Raymond Vernon's product-cycle model: 'International Investment and International Trade in the Product Cycle', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 80, no. 2 (1966), pp. 190–207. Brenner (Gr, p. 18) uses it to buttress on a priori grounds the assumptions of his own model, whereas Silver (*Forces of Labour*, pp. 77–97) uses it to show empirically the limits of industrial relocation in outflanking labour resistance.

to forestall competition from immigrant labour forces (often through adherence to racist ideologies and practices) has been far greater.⁶⁴

In sum, Brenner's argument for the absolute predominance of inter-capitalist competition over labour-capital struggles in determining system-wide and persistent contractions in profitability misses the complex historical interaction between horizontal and vertical conflicts. Although, world historically, inter-capitalist competition has indeed been the predominant influence—provided that we include inter-capitalist wars among the most important forms of that competition—labour-capital conflicts were never merely a 'dependent variable', above all on the eve and in the early stages of the latest long downturn.⁶⁵ Not only did conflicts over wages and working conditions in core regions contribute to the initial squeeze on profitability in the crucial 1968–73 period; more importantly, they forced the ruling groups of core capitalist countries to choose an inflationary rather than a deflationary strategy of crisis management.

To put it bluntly: by the end of the long post-war boom, the leverage of labour in core regions was sufficient to make any attempt to roll it back through a serious deflation far too risky, in social and political terms. An inflationary strategy, in contrast, promised to outflank workers' power far more effectively than international factor mobility could. It was, indeed, the great stagnation-cum-inflation of the 1970s—'stagflation' as it was called at the time—and its effects on inter-capitalist competition and labour-capital relations, that effectively wore down workers' power in the core, opening the way for its collapse under the impact of the Reagan-Thatcher counterrevolution. In order to capture the full significance of this development and its impact on the subsequent trajectory of the long downturn, however, it is not enough to focus

⁶⁴ This greater capacity is reflected in the fact that, proportionately speaking, migratory flows in the late 19th century were larger than today's, despite the technological advances in transportation since then. See David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations*, Stanford, CA 1999, chapter 6. Moreover, immigrant workers were the protagonists in some of the most militant and successful labour struggles in the US in the 1990s, for example, the Justice for Janitors campaigns; see Roger Waldinger, Chris Erickson et al., 'Helots No More: A Case Study of the Justice for Janitors Campaign in Los Angeles', in Kate Bronfenbrenner et al., eds, *Organizing to Win*, Ithaca 1998, pp. 102–19.

⁶⁵ See my *Long Twentieth Century*, and Arrighi and Silver, *Chaos and Governance*.

on labour-capital relations. Even more important were North-South relations, to which we now turn.

Southern exposure

In his critique of supply-side theorists, Brenner contrasts their disposition to view the world economy as the mere sum of its national components with his own attempt to see systemic processes as having a logic of their own.

[T]he emphasis of the supply-side theorists on institutions, policy and power has led them to frame their analyses too heavily on a country-by-country basis, in terms of national states and national economies—to view the international economy as a sort of spill-over of national ones and to see systemic economic problems as stemming from an agglomeration of local ones. In contrast, I shall take the international economy—the capital accumulation and profitability of the system as a whole—as a theoretical vantage point from which to analyse its crises and those of its national components.⁶⁶

Laudable as this intent is, Brenner's analysis falls short of its promise. In *The Boom and the Bubble*, as in 'Global Turbulence', he focuses almost exclusively on three national states/economies (the United States, Japan and Germany) and their mutual relations, with occasional references to other Western European countries and the 'miracle economies' of East Asia. China appears only fleetingly towards the end of 'Global Turbulence' and in little more detail in the closing pages of *The Boom and the Bubble*. The vast majority of the world's states and the bulk of its population have, apparently, no bearing on the functioning of Brenner's world economy.

Brenner admits that concentrating on three countries 'does introduce distortions'. But without specifying what these distortions are, he goes on to justify his narrow focus on three grounds. First, in 1950, the US, German and Japanese economies taken together 'accounted for 60 per cent of the output (in terms of purchasing power parities) of the seventeen leading capitalist economies and by 1994 that figure had risen to 66 per cent'. Second, each of the three economies 'stood . . . at the hub of great regional blocs, which they effectively dynamized and dominated'. And finally, 'the interaction among these three economies was . . . one

⁶⁶ GT, p. 23; emphasis in original.

of the keys to the evolution of the advanced capitalist world throughout the postwar period'.⁶⁷

These premises are questionable on two grounds. The combined weight of the three economies in question is indeed considerable, though somewhat less than Brenner's sources suggest.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, their combined share of value added in manufacturing—the branch of activities on which Brenner concentrates—has declined significantly in the course of the long downturn. The fall has been largely due to the rapid industrialization of many countries of the world's South—what Alice Amsden has called 'The Rise of the "Rest"'.⁶⁹ Moreover, as Amsden shows, the South's share of world manufactured exports has been growing even faster than its share of value added in manufacturing, rising from 7.5 per cent in 1975 to 23.3 per cent in 1998, in sharp contrast with the Japanese, Western European and North American shares, which were either stagnant or declining.⁷⁰ By dealing with the world's South in such a cursory way, Brenner tends to miss one of the most dynamic

⁶⁷ GT, p. 9.

⁶⁸ Using the more inclusive data sets of the World Bank, their combined share of 'world' GNP appears to have remained virtually constant, rising insignificantly from 53.1 per cent in 1960 to 53.6 per cent in 1999 (calculated from *World Tables*, vols 1 and 2, Washington, DC 1984 and *World Development Indicators*, CD ROM, Washington, DC 2001). 'World' GNP excludes the former communist countries of the USSR and Eastern Europe and other countries for which there are no comparable data for both 1960 and 1999. However, all the available evidence suggests that the exclusion has the effect of raising the above figures by one or two percentage points at most.

⁶⁹ Alice Amsden, *The Rise of 'The Rest'*, New York 2001. In a more recent article, Amsden provides data showing that the share of manufacturing value added produced in 'developing' countries (our South) *excluding China* rose from 10.7 per cent in 1975 to 17.0 per cent in 1998: Amsden, 'Good-bye Dependency Theory, Hello Dependency Theory', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 38, no. 1, Spring 2003, Table 1. By recalculating her percentages to include China, I obtain an increase in the Southern share from 11.9 per cent in 1975 to 21.8 per cent in 1998. As shown elsewhere, this increase in the Southern share of manufacturing value added reflects a strong North–South convergence in degree of industrialization—accompanied, however, by a complete lack of income convergence. See Arrighi, Beverly Silver and Benjamin Brewer, 'Industrial Convergence and the Persistence of the North–South Divide', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 38, no. 1, Spring 2003; and Arrighi, Silver and Brewer, 'A Reply to Alice Amsden', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 38, no. 1, Spring 2003.

⁷⁰ Amsden, 'Good-bye Dependency Theory', Table 2.

elements of the intensification of competition to which he attributes so much importance.

World-political context

The second problem with Brenner's focus on three countries is more serious: the virtual eviction of world politics from the analysis of capitalist dynamics. There is no question that the interaction of the United States, Japan and Germany has been 'one of the keys' to the evolution of world capitalism since the Second World War, but it has certainly not been the only one, or even the most important. As Brenner implicitly recognizes in the passage quoted on page nine above, throughout the long boom US interaction with Germany and Japan was thoroughly embedded in, and dominated by, the Cold War relations between the United States, the USSR and China. The crisis of profitability that marked the transition from the long boom to the long downturn, as well as the great stagflation of the 1970s, were themselves deeply affected by the parallel crisis of American hegemony which ensued from the escalation of the Vietnam war and the eventual US defeat. As for the Reagan-Thatcher neoliberal counterrevolution, it was not just, or even primarily, a response to the unsolved crisis of profitability, but also—and especially—a response to the deepening crisis of hegemony. All along, the trajectories of inter-capitalist competition and the interaction among the world's three largest economies were shaped by the broader political context. The almost complete absence of world politics from Brenner's story produces not only distortions but indeterminateness as well.

Consider the connexion between the crisis of profitability of the late 1960s and early 1970s and the contemporaneous breakdown of the gold-dollar exchange standard. As we have seen, Brenner implicitly acknowledges that 'political costs' played a role in the abandonment of gold, but nonetheless upholds the thesis that its primary determinant was the competitive struggle between American manufacturers and their German and Japanese rivals. We have already criticized this argument for ignoring the relatively autonomous role that workers' leverage played in the crisis. Nevertheless, the most important determinant was neither inter-capitalist competition nor labour-capital relations but the direct and, especially, the indirect effects of the escalation of the Vietnam War on the US balance of payments. Although Vietnam is conspicuous for its absence in Brenner's story, these effects do creep in on

a few occasions. Thus, 'stepped-up Vietnam War spending' is said to be the reason for the sudden acceleration of price inflation in the United States which, between 1965 and 1973, slowed down but did not stop the growth of real wages. This acceleration of inflation, in turn, is held responsible for the weakening of the competitive position of American manufacturers, both at home and abroad, vis-à-vis their German and Japanese rivals in the same period.⁷¹

These casual observations show that even Brenner is forced to acknowledge that, behind the intensification of competition between US and foreign manufacturers, and the vagaries of labour-capital conflicts in the United States and elsewhere, there lurks an eminently systemic but political variable, which his research design has ruled out of consideration. This lurking variable is the power struggle in which the US government sought to contain, through the use of force, the joint challenge of nationalism and communism in the Third World. As the escalation of the war in Vietnam failed to break the back of Vietnamese resistance, and provoked instead widespread opposition to the war in the United States itself, this struggle reached its climax in the same years as the crisis of profitability. As I have argued elsewhere, the costs of the war—including those programmes aimed at stemming the tide of domestic opposition—not only contributed to the profit squeeze, but were the most fundamental cause of the collapse of the Bretton Woods regime of fixed exchange rates and the massive devaluation of the US dollar that ensued.⁷²

Nadir of US hegemony

As Brenner maintains, the dollar devaluation of 1969–73 did help the United States to foist the burden of the profitability crisis onto Germany and Japan and check the pressure of rising money wages on profits at home. But I would argue that this redistribution of the burden was largely a by-product of policies aimed primarily at freeing the US government's struggle for dominance in the Third World from monetary constraints. At least initially, the liquidation of the gold-dollar exchange standard did seem to endow the US government with an unprecedented freedom of action in tapping the resources of the rest of the world simply

⁷¹ GI, p. 97; BB, pp. 102, 119.

⁷² *Long Twentieth Century*, pp. 300–8, 320–21.

by issuing its own currency.⁷³ However, this free hand could not prevent the defeat of the United States in Vietnam nor stop the precipitous decline of American prestige in its wake. Indeed, if anything, it worsened that decline by provoking a worldwide inflationary spiral which threatened to destroy the entire US credit structure and the worldwide networks of capital accumulation on which American wealth and power had become more dependent than ever before.⁷⁴

The decline of US power and prestige reached its nadir in the late 1970s with the Iranian Revolution, a new hike in oil prices, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and another serious crisis of confidence in the US dollar. Brenner hardly mentions this deepening crisis of US hegemony as the context in which, between 1979 and 1982, the monetary policies of the US government changed from ultra laxity to extreme tightness. He does trace the switch to 'a devastating run on the US currency that threatened the dollar's position as an international reserve currency'. But he has no satisfactory explanation for the flight and pays no attention to the Arab fears over Afghanistan and Iran which, according to *Business Week*, were behind the surge in the price of gold to an all-time high of \$875 in January 1980.⁷⁵ As in the case of the liquidation of the gold-dollar exchange standard ten years earlier, war and revolution in the South, rather than inter-capitalist competition among the world's three largest economies, were the primary driving force of the monetarist revolution of 1979–82. Fundamental change in the monetary sphere once again had major implications both for inter-capitalist and class struggles in core regions. But the strongest stimulus for the change came from the unsolved crisis of US hegemony in the Third World rather than the crisis of profitability as such.

Here too, the peculiarities of the late-twentieth-century long downturn may be usefully highlighted through a comparison with that of 1873–96. Though seldom remarked upon, differences in North–South relations between the two long downturns are even more significant than those

⁷³ Riccardo Parboni, *The Dollar and its Rivals*, London 1981, pp. 47, 89–90.

⁷⁴ *Long Twentieth Century*, pp. 310–14, 317–20. As we shall see, the so-called first 'oil shock' of 1973–74 was a crucial intervening variable in the worldwide inflationary spiral that connects the crisis of US hegemony of the late 1960s and early 1970s to the devastating run on the US dollar of the late 1970s.

⁷⁵ Cited in Michael Moffitt, *The World's Money: International Banking from Bretton Woods to the Brink of Insolvency*, New York 1983, p. 178.

of labour and capital. Most importantly, the earlier downturn occurred in the midst of the last and largest wave of Northern territorial conquest and colonization of the South, whereas that of the twentieth century took place at the tail-end of the greatest wave of decolonization in world history.⁷⁶ In between there stood the great 'revolt against the west' of the first half of the twentieth century which, in Geoffrey Barraclough's view, marked the beginning of an entirely new era:

Never before in the whole of human history had so revolutionary a reversal occurred with such rapidity. The change in the position of the peoples of Asia and Africa and in their relations with Europe was the surest sign of the advent of a new era, and when the history of the first half of the twentieth century—which, for most historians, is still dominated by European wars and European problems . . . comes to be written in a longer perspective, there is little doubt that no single theme will prove to be of greater importance than the revolt against the west.⁷⁷

The moment for the longer perspective advocated by Barraclough has obviously not yet come. We live instead in a time when the 'triumph', the seemingly unlimited power of the West, makes the earlier Southern revolt look insignificant, if not futile. Yet the fundamental difference between North–South relations during the two long downturns remains, and neither the origins, nor the trajectory, nor the consequences of the latest can be accurately deciphered except in its light. To illustrate the point I shall focus once again on the monetary aspects of the two long downturns.

India's contribution

In the preceding section we traced the inflationary character of the latest long downturn to the social and political impossibility of subjecting labour–capital relations in core regions to the discipline of a metallic standard, as they had been during the late nineteenth century. The nature and strength of this social constraint within core regions, however, themselves depend critically on the particular political arrangements that link the core to the peripheries. Nothing illustrates this

⁷⁶ On waves of colonization and decolonization, see Albert Bergesen and Ronald Schoenberg, 'Long Waves of Colonial Expansion and Contraction, 1415–1969', in Bergesen, ed., *Studies of the Modern World-System*, New York 1980.

⁷⁷ Geoffrey Barraclough, *An Introduction to Contemporary History*, Harmondsworth 1967, pp. 153–54.

better than the close connexion between Britain's adherence to the gold standard and its extraction of tribute from the Subcontinent. Britain's Indian empire was crucial in two main respects. First, militarily: in Lord Salisbury's words, 'India was an English barrack in the Oriental Seas from which we may draw any number of troops without paying for them'.⁷⁶ Funded entirely by the Indian taxpayer, these forces were organized in a European-style colonial army and used regularly in the endless series of wars through which Britain opened up Asia and Africa to Western trade, investment and influence.⁷⁷ They were 'the iron fist in the velvet glove of Victorian expansionism . . . the major coercive force behind the internationalization of industrial capitalism'.⁸⁰

Second, and equally important, the infamous Home Charges and the Bank of England's control over India's foreign-exchange reserves jointly turned India into the 'pivot' of Britain's global financial and commercial supremacy. India's balance-of-payments deficit with Britain, and surplus with all other countries, enabled Britain to settle its deficit on current account with the rest of the world. Without India's forcible contribution to the balance of payments of imperial Britain, it would have been impossible for the latter 'to use the income from her overseas investment for further investment abroad, and to give back to the international monetary system the liquidity she absorbed as investment income'. Moreover, Indian monetary reserves 'provided a large *masse de manoeuvre* which British monetary authorities could use to supplement their own reserves and to keep London the centre of the international monetary system'.⁸¹

In enforcing monetary discipline at home on workers and capitalists alike, Britain's ruling elite thus faced an altogether different situation to that of US leaders a century later. For one thing, the exercise of world-hegemonic functions—including the endless series of wars fought in

⁷⁶ B. R. Tomlinson, 'India and the British Empire, 1880–1935', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 12, no. 4 (1975), p. 341.

⁷⁷ If we take Asia and Africa together, there were as many as 72 separate British military campaigns between 1837 and 1900: Brian Bond, ed., *Victorian Military Campaigns*, London 1967, pp. 309–11. By a different count, between 1803 and 1901 Britain fought 50 major colonial wars: Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, Berkeley 1987, p. 223.

⁸⁰ David Washbrook, 'South Asia, the World System, and World Capitalism', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 49, no. 3 (1990), p. 481.

⁸¹ Marcello de Cecco, *The International Gold Standard: Money and Empire*, 2nd ed. New York 1984, pp. 62–3.

the world's South—did not involve the kind of inflationary pressures that the Vietnam War engendered in the United States. Not only were the wars financed by Indian money but, fought by Indian and other colonial troops, they did not require the kind of social expenditure the US government had to incur in order to contain domestic opposition to escalating casualties.

Costs of war aside, unlike the United States in the late twentieth century, Britain could internalize the benefits (for its metropolitan subjects) and externalize the costs (on its colonial subjects) of the ceaseless 'structural adjustments' involved in the subjection of its currency to a metallic standard. Coercive control over the surplus of India's balance of payments enabled Britain to shift the burdens of its own persistent trade deficits onto Indian taxpayers, workers and capitalists.⁸² In a post-colonial world, in contrast, no such blatant coercion was available. The United States faced the stark choice of either balancing its trade and current-accounts deficit through a drastic downsizing of its national economy and expenditures abroad, or alienating a growing share of its future income to foreign lenders. The choice of an inflationary strategy of crisis management was not dictated solely by the social and political impossibility of subjecting the American national economy to a drastic downsizing, or by the relief from foreign competitive pressures that the strategy could bring to US manufacturers. It was also a more or less conscious attempt *not* to choose between the two equally unpalatable alternatives. The deepening crisis of US hegemony of the late 1970s and the devastating run on the dollar it provoked were a shocking reminder that the choice could no longer be postponed.

The monetary counterrevolution initiated in the closing year of the Carter administration and pursued with greater force under Reagan was a pragmatic response to this situation. As Brenner notes, the turn-around deepened rather than alleviated the crisis of profitability. But as he does not note, it did reverse—beyond the rosier expectations of its perpetrators—the precipitous decline in US world power of the preceding fifteen years.⁸³ In order to understand this unexpected reversal, we

⁸² On Britain's persistent trade deficits see, among others, Andre Gunder Frank, 'Multilateral Merchandise Trade Imbalances and Uneven Economic Development', *Journal of European Economic History*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1978), pp. 407–38; and de Cecco, *International Gold Standard*.

⁸³ Arrighi, *Long Twentieth Century*, pp. 323–4.

must once again shift focus to reexamine the processes of inter-capitalist competition that are at the centre of Brenner's analysis.

Financial underpinnings of the US revival

Brenner, as we have seen, attributes the persistence of 'overproduction and overcapacity' after 1973 partly to the behaviour of higher-cost incumbent firms—which had 'every reason to defend their markets and counterattack by speeding up the process of innovation and investment in additional fixed capital'—and partly to the actions of the US, Japanese and German governments, which aggravated rather than alleviated the underlying tendency towards 'too little exit' and 'too much entry'. We also noted that, while governmental action occupies centre-stage in Brenner's historical narrative, the theoretically more crucial argument about firms is for the most part developed deductively, on the basis of circumstantial evidence.

A first problem with this central thesis is that it is almost exclusively focused on manufacturing. Brenner does not give an explicit justification for this, as he does for his focus on the American, Japanese and German economies. The theoretical and historical identification of capitalism with *industrial* capitalism appears to be for him—as for most social scientists, Marxist and non-Marxist alike—an article of faith which requires no justification. Yet the share of value added generated in manufacturing worldwide has been comparatively small, shrinking steadily from 28 per cent in 1960, to 24.5 per cent in 1980, to 20.5 per cent in 1998. Moreover, the contraction has been greater than average in Brenner's 'advanced' capitalist countries, the share for North America, Western Europe, Australasia and Japan combined having declined from 28.9 per cent in 1960, to 24.5 per cent in 1980, to 19.7 per cent in 1998.⁸⁴

Brenner does seem to be aware of this problem but he sees it as a symptom of economic crisis rather than a reason for questioning the relevance and validity of his focus on manufacturing. Thus, in commenting on the 'huge expansion' experienced by the American non-manufacturing sector in the 1980s, he interprets it as 'a symptom of the broad economic

⁸⁴ The percentages have been calculated from World Bank, *World Tables* (1984), and *World Development Indicators* (2001). The figures for the world include all the countries for which data are available for 1960, 1980 and 1998. Value added is GDP.

decline that accompanied the crisis of manufacturing in the US economy, which can usefully be called “de-industrialization”, with all its negative connotations’.⁸⁵ At one point, however, he does feel it necessary to provide some justification for his narrow focus on manufacturing.

It has become standard to downplay the importance of the manufacturing sector, by pointing to its shrinking share of total employment and GDP. But, during the 1990s, the US corporate manufacturing sector still accounted for 46.8 per cent of total profits accruing to the non-financial corporate sector (the corporate economy minus the corporate financial sector), and in 1999 it took 46.2 per cent of that total. The climb of pre-tax manufacturing profitability was in fact the source of the parallel recovery of pre-tax profitability in the private economy as a whole.⁸⁶

Leaving aside the fact that it is not clear why profits in the corporate financial sector are not included in the comparison, this justification does not stand up to a close empirical scrutiny. As Greta Krippner has shown, on the basis of a thorough analysis of the available evidence, not only had the share of total US corporate profits accounted for by finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) in the 1980s nearly caught up with and, in the 1990s, surpassed the share accounted for by manufacturing; more important, in the 1970s and 1980s *non-financial firms themselves* sharply increased their investment in financial assets relative to that in plant and equipment, and became increasingly dependent on financial sources of revenue and profit relative to that earned from productive activities. Particularly significant is Krippner’s finding that manufacturing not only dominates but *leads* this trend towards the ‘financialization’ of the non-financial economy.⁸⁷

Brenner does not provide any indicator for his ‘over-capacity and over-production’ model comparable to Krippner’s multiple indicators for the financialization of the non-financial economy. Nevertheless, Anwar Shaikh does provide two indicators for ‘capacity utilization’ in US manufacturing—one based on his own measure, and one on that of the

⁸⁵ BB, p. 79.

⁸⁶ BB, pp. 68–70; emphasis in original.

⁸⁷ Greta Krippner, ‘What is Financialization?’ Paper presented at the American Sociological Association Meeting, Chicago, 16–19 August 2002. Krippner’s analysis is based on data provided by the Federal Reserve Flow of Funds Accounts, the Bureau of Economic Analysis National Income and Product Accounts; the IRS Corporation Income Tax Returns; Balance of Payments data; and the IRS Corporate Foreign Tax Credit data.

Federal Reserve Board—which we may take as imperfect *inverse* indicators of over-capacity.⁸⁸ Across the entire period 1947–95, both indicators show a great deal of fluctuation in capacity utilization but no clear long-term trend. More specifically, in line with Brenner's argument, both indicators—especially Shaikh's—suggest that over-capacity in US manufacturing decreased sharply during the closing years of the long boom and increased even more sharply during the crisis of profitability that marked the transition from the boom to the long downturn. After 1973, in contrast, both indicators continue to show considerable fluctuations but provide no evidence to support Brenner's contention that the long downturn was characterized by above-normal over-capacity. The Federal Reserve Board's figures show capacity utilization settling back to where it was in the 1950s with no trend either way, while Shaikh's show capacity utilization in the 1970s at higher levels than in the 1950s and rising further in the 1980s and 1990s—suggesting a comparatively low, and declining, level of over-capacity.

Supplemented with what can be gauged from these imperfect indicators, Krippner's unambiguous findings throw serious doubts on Brenner's *a priori* assumptions concerning the behaviour of incumbent, higher-cost manufacturers. The predominant response of these firms to the irruption in their markets of lower-cost competitors does not appear to have been a strenuous defence of their sunk capital, and a counterattack through additional investment in fixed capital that further increased over-capacity. Although this kind of response was certainly present, the predominant response was, in capitalist terms, far more rational. Confronted with heightened international competition (especially in trade-intensive sectors like manufacturing), higher-cost incumbent firms responded to falling returns by diverting a growing proportion of their incoming cash flows from investment in fixed capital and commodities to liquidity and accumulation through financial channels.

⁸⁸ Anwar Shaikh, 'Explaining the Global Economic Crisis', *Historical Materialism*, no. 5, Winter 1999, pp. 140–41. A major problem in using these two indicators, or indeed any other indicator, to gauge Brenner's 'over-capacity' is that, as previously noted, he always uses this term together with the term 'over-production', and never tells us how to disentangle the two concepts. This conflation makes it impossible to know what would be a valid indicator for either over-capacity or over-production. But unless the use of the term *overcapacity* is completely redundant and has no meaning of its own, it is reasonable to suppose that *increases* in Brenner's over-capacity are reflected in *decreases* in capacity utilization and vice versa.

This is what Krippner observes empirically. But this is also what we should expect theoretically, whenever returns to capital invested in trade and production fall below a certain threshold and inter-capitalist competition becomes a zero- or negative-sum game. Under these conditions—precisely those which, according to Brenner, have characterized the long downturn—the risks and uncertainties involved in reinvesting incoming cash flows into trade and production are high, and it makes good business sense to use them to increase the liquidity of assets as a defensive or offensive weapon in the escalating competitive struggle, both within the particular industry or sphere of economic activity in which the firm had previously specialized and outside it. For liquidity enables enterprises not just to escape the ‘slaughtering of capital values’ which, sooner or later, ensues from the over-accumulation of capital and the intensification of competition in old and new lines of business, but also to take over at bargain prices the assets, customers and suppliers of the less prudent and ‘irrationally exuberant’ enterprises that continued to sink their incoming cash flows into fixed capital and commodities.⁸⁹

Finance: the last refuge

In a sense, this competitive strategy is nothing but the continuation by other means of the logic of the product cycle that Brenner himself invokes in another context. For the leading capitalist organizations of a given epoch, this logic involves shifting resources ceaselessly, through one kind of ‘innovation’ or another, from market niches that have become overcrowded (and therefore less profitable) to those that are less crowded (and therefore more profitable). When escalating competition reduces the availability of relatively empty, profitable niches in the commodity markets, the leading capitalist organizations have one last refuge, to which they can retreat and shift competitive pressures onto others. This final refuge is the money market—in Schumpeter’s words, ‘always, as it were, the headquarters of the capitalist system, from which orders go out to its individual divisions’.⁹⁰

In this respect, as previously noted, US capital in the late twentieth century was following a trajectory analogous to that of British capital

⁸⁹ This aspect of inter-capitalist competition has been the clearest sign of continuity among the various organizational forms that historical capitalism has assumed before and after the industrial revolution. See my *Long Twentieth Century*, pp. 220–38.

⁹⁰ Joseph Schumpeter, *The Theory of Economic Development*, New York 1961, p. 126.

a century before, which had also responded to the intensification of competition in manufacturing through financialization. As Halford Mackinder pointed out in a speech delivered to London bankers at the turn of the century, when the financialization of British capital was already at an advanced stage: the industrialization of other countries enhanced the importance of a single clearing house, which 'will always be where there is the greatest ownership of capital . . . [W]e are essentially the people who have capital, and those who have capital always share in the activity of brains and muscles of other countries'.⁹¹ This was certainly the case during the *belle époque*, when nearly one half of Britain's assets were overseas and about 10 per cent of its national income consisted of interest on foreign investment.⁹²

In spite of the far greater economic, military and political power of the United States in comparison to the British empire, sharing in the 'activity of brains and muscles' in other countries through financialization has been more arduous for US capital. To be sure, American

⁹¹ Quoted in Peter Huggill, *World Trade since 1431: Geography, Technology and Capitalism*, Baltimore 1993, p. 305.

⁹² Alec Cairncross, *Home and Foreign Investment, 1870-1913*, Cambridge 1953, pp. 3, 23. As Peter Mathias noted, British foreign investment 'was not just "blind capital" but the "blind capital" of *rentiers* organized by financiers and businessmen very much with a view to the trade that would be flowing when the enterprise was under way'. British railway building in the US, and a *fortiori* in countries like Australia, Canada, South Africa and Argentina 'was instrumental in opening up these vast land masses and developing export sectors in primary produce . . . for Britain'. Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain 1700-1914*, London 1969, p. 329; see also Stanley Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise in Britain: From the Industrial Revolution to World War I*, New York 1992, pp. 233ff. The abundant liquidity that accumulated in, or passed through, British hands was a powerful instrument in the competitive struggle, not just in commodity markets but in the armament race as well. From the mid-1840s until the 1860s most technological breakthroughs in the design of warships were pioneered by France. And yet, each French breakthrough called forth naval appropriations in Britain that France could not match, so that it was 'relatively easy for the Royal Navy to catch up technically and surpass numerically each time the French changed the basis of the competition': William McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since AD 1000*, Chicago 1982, pp. 227-28. There is a little-noticed resemblance between this pattern of the 19th century armament race and that between the US and USSR during the Cold War. The key technological breakthrough was the Soviet *Sputnik* in October 1957. But once the US launched their own space programme in 1961, it overtook Soviet achievements within a few years.

primacy in the formation of vertically integrated, multinational corporations has been a highly effective means of putting such sharing into operation throughout the twentieth century; and immigration, of course, has 'drained' brains and muscles from all over the world, throughout US history.⁹³ Unlike Britain in the nineteenth century, however, the United States was not structurally oriented to playing the role of global clearing house; its relationship to the world economy was rather that of a self-centred and largely self-sufficient continental economy.⁹⁴

Under the conditions of the increasing fragmentation and eventual breakdown of the world market that characterized inter-capitalist struggles in the first half of the twentieth century, the scale, self-centredness and relative self-sufficiency of the US economy provided American

⁹³ US corporations became multinational almost as soon as they had completed their continental integration: Stephen Hymer, 'The Multinational Corporation and the Law of Uneven Development', in Jagdish Bhagwati, ed., *Economics and World Order*, New York 1972, p. 121. By 1902 Europeans were already speaking of an 'American invasion', and by 1914 US direct investment abroad amounted to 7 per cent of US GNP—the same percentage as in 1966, when Europeans once again felt threatened by an 'American challenge'; see Mira Wilkins, *The Emergence of Multinational Enterprise*, Cambridge 1970, pp. 71, 201.

⁹⁴ This difference was underscored by a Study Group established in the early 1950s under the sponsorship of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and the National Planning Association. In challenging the assumption 'that a sufficiently integrated world economic system could be again achieved by means essentially similar to those employed in the 19th century', it pointed out that the US—although a 'mature creditor' like 19th-century Britain—had an altogether different relationship to the world. The latter was 'fully integrated into the world economic system and in large measure making possible its successful functioning owing to [its] dependence on foreign trade, the pervasive influence of its commercial and financial institutions, and the basic consistency between its national economic policies and those required for world economic integration'. The US, in contrast, is 'only partially integrated into the world economic system, with which it is also partly competitive, and whose accustomed mode and pace of functioning it tends periodically to disturb. No network of American commercial and financial institutions exists to bind together and to manage the day-to-day operations of the world trading system': William Elliott, ed., *The Political Economy of American Foreign Policy: Its Concepts, Strategy, and Limits*, New York 1955, p. 43. As argued elsewhere, this difference is important in explaining why, even at the height of its liberal crusade of the 1980s and 1990s, the US did not adhere unilaterally to the precepts of the liberal creed, as Britain did in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. See Beverly Silver and Arrighi, 'Polanyi's "Double Movement": The Belle Époques of British and US Hegemony Compared', *Politics and Society*, vol. 31, no. 2, June 2003.

capital with decisive competitive advantages. US primacy in the formation of vertically integrated, multinational corporations enabled it to outflank, through direct investment, the rampant protectionism of the period. Nevertheless, the very success of the United States in promoting the reunification and expansion of the global market after the end of the Second World War diminished those advantages; and the intensification of international competition that ensued turned them, in some respects, into handicaps. An expanded and unified world market enabled enterprises based in smaller, less self-centred and self-sufficient countries to enjoy economies of scale and scope comparable to those of US firms. The lack of organic integration of the United States in the global economy, meanwhile, prevented American capital from taking full advantage of the tendency towards financialization which was gaining momentum, at home and abroad, under the impact of intensifying competition and the associated crisis of profitability.

Here lies yet another contradiction of the inflationary crisis-management strategy that the United States adopted under Nixon. As argued in the preceding sections, this had been dictated by a combination of economic, social and political considerations which, despite their diversity, had one underlying goal in common: the attempt to preserve the relative self-centredness, self-sufficiency and size of the American economy. Whatever its success in redistributing the burden of the profitability crisis from US capital to US labour and foreign competitors, the strategy ended up by deepening the crisis of American hegemony and by provoking a devastating run on the dollar which threatened to destroy US financial power in the world at large. The argument developed in this section provides us with new insights into the reasons for this deepening crisis and for the success of the monetarist counterrevolution in reversing the precipitous decline of US world power.

Hegemony and financialization

In a nutshell, the main reason why the inflationary strategy backfired is that, instead of attracting, it repelled the growing mass of liquidity, released by the financialization of processes of capital accumulation on a world scale, from the US economy and its currency. And conversely, the main reason why the monetarist counterrevolution was so stunningly successful in reversing the decline in US power is that it brought about a massive rerouting of global capital flows towards the United States and

the dollar. To be sure, this rerouting transformed the United States from being the main source of world liquidity and foreign direct investment, as it had been in the 1950s and 1960s, into the world's main debtor nation and absorber of liquidity, from the 1980s up to the present.⁹⁵ As we shall see, Brenner is probably right in doubting that levels of indebtedness of this order are sustainable in the long run. Nevertheless, for twenty years now an escalating foreign debt has enabled the United States to turn the deteriorating crisis of the 1970s into a *belle époque* wholly comparable to, and in some respects far more spectacular, than Britain's Edwardian era.

It has, first of all, allowed the United States to achieve through financial means what it could not achieve by force of arms—to defeat the USSR in the Cold War and tame the rebellious South. Massive borrowing from abroad, mostly Japan, was essential to Reagan's escalation of the armament race—primarily, though not exclusively, through the Strategic Defence Initiative—well beyond what the USSR could afford. Combined with generous support to Afghan resistance against Soviet occupation, the escalation forced the Soviet Union into a double confrontation neither side of which it could win: in Afghanistan, its high-tech military apparatus found itself in the same difficulties that had led to the US defeat in Vietnam; while in the arms race, the United States could mobilize financial resources wholly beyond the Soviet reach.⁹⁶

At the same time, the massive redirection of capital flows to the United States turned the flood of capital that Southern countries had experienced in the 1970s into the sudden 'drought' of the 1980s. First signalled by the Mexican default of 1982, this drought was probably

⁹⁵ The extent of this rerouting can be gauged from the change in the current account of the US balance of payments. In the five-year period 1965–69 the account still had a surplus of \$12 billion, which constituted almost half (46%) of the total surplus of G7 countries. In 1970–74, the surplus contracted to \$4.1 billion and to 21% of the total surplus of G7 countries. In 1975–79, the surplus turned into a deficit of \$7.4 billion. After that the deficit escalated to previously unimaginable levels: \$146.5 billion in 1980–84; \$660.6 billion in 1985–89; falling back to \$324.4 billion in 1990–94 before swelling to \$912.4 billion in 1995–99 (calculated from International Monetary Fund, *International Financial Statistics Yearbook*, Washington, DC, various years).

⁹⁶ See footnote 92 for a parallel with the role that superior financial resources played in determining the outcome of the mid-19th century arms race between France and Britain.

the single most important factor in shifting competitive pressures from North to South and in provoking a major bifurcation in the fortunes of Southern regions in the 1980s and 1990s. On the one hand, there were regions—most notably East Asia—that, for historical reasons, had a strong advantage in competing for a share of the expanding US demand for cheap industrial products. These areas tended to benefit from the redirection of capital flows, because the improvement in their balance of payments lessened their need to compete with the United States in world financial markets, and indeed turned some of them into major lenders to the US. Other regions—most notably, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America—were, for historical reasons, particularly disadvantaged in competing for a share of the North American demand. These tended to run into balance-of-payments difficulties that put them into the hopeless position of having to compete directly with the United States in world financial markets.⁹⁷ Either way, the United States benefited both economically and politically as American business and governmental agencies were best positioned to mobilize in the global competitive and power struggles for the cheap commodities and credit which Southern ‘winners’ eagerly supplied, as well as for the assets that Southern ‘losers’ had to alienate willy-nilly at bargain prices.

Finally, massive inflows of foreign capital were essential to the ‘Keynesianism with a vengeance’ that rescued the US and world economies from the deep recession provoked by the switch from extremely lax to very tight monetary policies. This recession, and the ideological and practical liquidation of the welfare state that accompanied it, was the true turning point in the collapse of workers’ leverage in the US and other core regions. To be sure, the stagflation of the 1970s had already worn down workers’ resistance against attempts to shift the burden of intensifying competition onto their shoulders. But it was only in the 1980s that, in core countries in general and the United States in particular, pressure from below on money wages subsided, and workers came to rely on governmental control of price inflation as their best chance of protecting their standards of living.

⁹⁷ For a preliminary analysis of the comparative advantages of East Asia and disadvantages of Sub-Saharan Africa in the new global environment of the 1980s and 1990s, see my ‘The African Crisis: World Systemic and Regional Aspects’, *NLR* 15, May–June 2002.

As Brenner maintains, the weakening of labour's leverage was greater in the United States than in other core regions and thereby contributed to the revival of US profitability in the 1990s. Yet although this was undoubtedly a factor in the revival, Brenner's narrow focus on inter-capitalist competition in manufacturing is again misleading. For the turnaround was primarily due, not to the comparatively slower growth of US real wages, but to the overall re-orientation of the American economy to take full advantage of financialization, both at home and in the world at large. From this point of view, the 'de-industrialization' of the United States and other core regions certainly had 'negative connotations' for the workers most directly affected by it; but it had no such dire meaning for the US economy as a whole, and especially its wealthier strata. Rather, it was a necessary condition of the great revival of US wealth, power and prestige of the 1990s, when—to paraphrase Landes's characterization of the Edwardian era—in spite of rattlings of arms in the South and former East or monitory references to a coming clash of civilizations, everything seemed right again.

III. A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

Radical as the foregoing criticisms may appear and, in some respects, actually are, they do not involve a refutation so much as a recasting of Brenner's argument within a broader social and political perspective. In the concluding part of this article, I shall make such recasting explicit by drawing from and adding to Brenner's account of the long downturn and my own critique of it. As in the first section, I shall deal successively with the origins, dynamics and prospective outcomes of the long downturn.

In underscoring the difficulties involved in attributing causal priority to any of the interacting elements that have propelled the economic expansion of East Asia in the 1970s and 1980s, Robert Wade has invited us to think 'more in terms of opening a combination lock than a padlock.'⁹⁸ What is true of East Asia is *a fortiori* true of the world-economic expansion of the 1950s and 1960s and of the long downturn that followed. Brenner's uneven development is undoubtedly an element of the combination; but it is by no means the key that unlocks the mechanisms

⁹⁸ Robert Wade, 'East Asian Economic Success: Conflicting Perspectives, Partial Insights, Shaky Evidence', *World Politics*, 44 (1992), p. 312.

of capital accumulation on a world scale, from boom through crisis to relative stagnation.

Origins of the downturn

The particular form that uneven development assumed after the Second World War—as opposed to the forms that it took, let us say, in the nineteenth century, or in the first half of the twentieth—was thoroughly embedded in, and shaped by, the formation and evolution of US world hegemony in the Cold War era. US hegemony, in turn, had a peculiar social character, reflected in system-wide institutional arrangements quite different from those that underlay the nineteenth-century UK-centred world economy. It follows that the operation of uneven development in generating both the postwar boom and the subsequent long downturn can only be understood in conjunction with the formation and evolution of the particular institutional arrangements of US hegemony.

These arrangements were eminently political in origin and social in orientation. They were based on the widespread belief among US government officials that ‘a new world order was the only guarantee against chaos followed by revolution’ and that ‘security for the world had to be based on American power exercised through international systems’.⁹⁹ Equally widespread was the belief that the lessons of the New Deal were relevant to the international sphere.

Just as the New Deal government increasingly took active responsibility for the welfare of the nation, US foreign policy planners took increasing responsibility for the welfare of the world . . . It could not insulate itself from the world’s problems. As at home, moreover, it could not neatly pick and choose among those problems, distinguishing politics from economics, security from prosperity, defence from welfare. In the lexicon of the New Deal, taking responsibility meant government intervention on a grand scale.¹⁰⁰

In Franklin Roosevelt’s original vision, the New Deal would be ‘globalized’ through the United Nations, and the USSR would be included

⁹⁹ Franz Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power: An Inquiry into the Origins, Currents and Contradictions of World Politics*, New York 1974, pp. 44, 68.

¹⁰⁰ Ann-Marie Burley, ‘Regulating the World: Multilateralism, International Law, and the Projection of the New Deal Regulatory State’, in John Ruggie, ed., *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form*, New York 1993, pp. 125–6, 129–32.

among the poor nations of the world to be incorporated into the evolving Pax Americana, for the benefit and security of all. In the shoddier but more realistic political project that materialized under Truman, in contrast, the containment of Soviet power became the main organizing principle of US hegemony, and American control over world money and military power became the primary means of that containment.¹⁰¹ This more realistic model was not so much a negation of the original notion of creating a global welfare state, as its transformation into a project of a 'warfare-welfare state' on a world scale, in competition and opposition to the Soviet system of communist states.¹⁰²

The speed and extent of the process of uneven development, to which Brenner traces both the postwar boom and the subsequent downturn, can only be understood with reference to the successes and failures of this project. The model was, indeed, highly successful in launching one of the greatest system-wide expansions in capitalist history. In its absence, world capitalism might well have gone through a long period of stagnation, if not outright depression, comparable to that which extended from the initial establishment of British hegemony at the end of the Napoleonic Wars to the take-off of the mid-nineteenth-century long boom at the end of the 1840s. Under US hegemony, in contrast, such a contraction was avoided altogether through the joint operation of both military and social Keynesianism on a world scale. Military Keynesianism—that is, massive expenditures on the rearmament of the United States and its allies and the deployment of a far-flung network of quasi-permanent military bases—was undoubtedly the most dynamic and conspicuous element of the combination. But the US-sponsored spread of social Keynesianism—that is, the governmental pursuit of full employment and high mass consumption in the West or North, and of 'development' in the South—was also an essential factor.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Schurmann, *Logic of World Power*, pp. 5, 67, 77.

¹⁰² To borrow James O'Connor's expression; see O'Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, New York 1973.

¹⁰³ On the critical role of military Keynesianism in launching the expansion see, among others, Fred Block, *The Origins of International Economic Disorder: A Study of the United States International Monetary Policy from World War II to the Present*, Berkeley 1977, pp. 103–4; Thomas McCormick, *America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War*, Baltimore 1989, pp. 77–8; Arrighi, *Long Twentieth Century*, pp. 295–98. On the Northern and Southern variants of social Keynesianism, see Arrighi and Silver, *Chaos and Governance*, pp. 202–11; and Silver, *Forces of Labour*, pp. 149–61.

The reconstruction and upgrading of the German and Japanese industrial apparatuses—the centrepiece of Brenner's uneven development—were integral aspects of the internationalization of the US warfare-welfare state. As Bruce Cumings notes, commenting specifically on the American approach to Japanese reindustrialization, 'George Kennan's policy of containment was always limited and parsimonious, based on the idea that four or five industrial structures existed in the world: the Soviets had one and the United States had four, and things should be kept this way'. Kennan's 'idea' was translated into US government sponsorship of Japan's reindustrialization. The Korean War became "Japan's Marshall Plan" . . . War procurement propelled Japan along its war-beating industrial path'.¹⁰⁴

Far from being a spontaneous process originating from the actions of capitalist accumulators 'from below'—as it had been in the nineteenth century under British hegemony—uneven development under American hegemony was a process consciously and actively encouraged 'from above' by a globalizing US warfare-welfare state. This difference accounts not just for the speed and extent of the long postwar boom but also for the particular combination of limits and contradictions that transformed it into the relative stagnation of the 1970s and 1980s. Brenner's account of the onset of the long downturn points to one such limit and contradiction: successful catching up creates new competitors, and intensifying competition exercises a downward pressure on the profits

¹⁰⁴ Bruce Cumings, 'The Origins and Development of the Northeast Asian Political Economy: Industrial Sectors, Product Cycles, and Political Consequences', in Frederic Deyo, ed., *The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism*, Ithaca 1987, p. 60. And Cumings, 'The Political Economy of the Pacific Rim', in Ravi Palat, ed., *Pacific-Asia and the Future of the World-System*, Westport, CT 1993, p. 31. See also Jerome Cohen, *Japan's Postwar Economy*, Bloomington, IN 1958, pp. 85–91; Takafusa Nakamura, *The Postwar Japanese Economy*, Tokyo 1981, p. 42; and Itoh, *World Economic Crisis*, p. 142. US promotion of the reconstruction and upgrading of the German industrial apparatus occurred through different but equally effective channels. Germany was of course among the main beneficiaries of the Marshall Plan and US military expenditure abroad. Nevertheless, the most important contribution was US sponsorship of Western European economic union. As John Foster Dulles declared in 1948, 'a healthy Europe' could not be 'divided into small compartments'. It had to be organized into a market 'big enough to justify modern methods of cheap production for mass consumption'. A reindustrialized Germany was an essential component of this new Europe (quoted in McCormick, *America's Half-Century*, pp. 79–80).

of incumbent firms. To the extent that this was an unanticipated outcome of the Cold War project, it was not just a limitation but also a contradiction of American policies. It is nonetheless more plausible to suppose that the outcome was an anticipated but unavoidable economic cost of policies whose primary objectives were not economic but social—the containment of communism and the taming of nationalism—and political: the consolidation of US hegemony.

Drawbacks of the Cold War project

The most serious contradiction of US policies lay elsewhere: that is, precisely in the difficulties involved in attaining these social and political objectives. To be sure, in the incumbent and rising centres of capital accumulation, rapid economic growth, low levels of unemployment and the actual spread of high mass consumption consolidated the hegemony of one variant or another of liberal capitalism. As previously noted, however, even in these centres the political triumph of capitalism did not lessen and, on the whole, actually strengthened the disposition of workers to seek a greater share of the social product through direct struggle or electoral mobilization. Washington's Cold War policies thus put a double squeeze on profits—a first squeeze from the intensification of inter-capitalist competition, which they promoted by creating conditions favourable to the upgrading and expansion of the Japanese and Western European productive apparatuses; and a second squeeze deriving from the social empowerment of labour, which they promoted through the pursuit of near full employment and high mass consumption throughout the Western world.

This double squeeze was bound to produce a system-wide crisis of profitability but there is no reason why, in itself, it should have produced the crisis of US hegemony which became the dominant event of the 1970s. If the problems of profitability came to be subsumed within and dominated by this broader hegemonic crisis, the reason is that in the world's South the US warfare-welfare state attained neither its social nor its political objectives. Socially, the 'Fair Deal' that Truman promised to the poor countries of the world in his 1949 inaugural address never materialized in any actual narrowing of the income gap that separated North and South. As Third World countries stepped up their industrialization efforts—the generally prescribed means to 'development'—there was indeed industrial convergence between North and South; but, as

previously noted, there was no income convergence at all. Third World countries were thus bearing the costs without reaping the expected benefits of industrialization. Worse still, in 1970 Robert McNamara, then president of the World Bank, acknowledged that even high rates of GNP growth did not result in the expected improvements in the welfare of Third World nations.¹⁰⁵

Partly related to this social failure, the political failure of the US warfare-welfare state was far more conspicuous. The epicentre of this was of course the war in Vietnam, where the United States confronted the practical impossibility of victory, despite escalating US casualties and the deployment of military firepower without historical precedent for a conflict of this kind. The upshot was that the United States lost much of its political credibility as global policeman, thereby emboldening throughout the Third World the nationalist and social revolutionary forces that Cold War policies were meant to contain. Along with much of the political credibility of its military apparatus, the United States also lost control of the world monetary system. As contended earlier in this article, the escalation of public expenditures to sustain the military effort in Vietnam and to overcome opposition to the war at home—through the 'Great Society' programme—strengthened inflationary pressure in the United States and the world economy at large, deepened the fiscal crisis of the US state and eventually led to the collapse of the US-centred system of fixed exchange rates.

It is, of course, impossible to know whether the Bretton Woods regime would have survived without these effects of the Vietnam War. Nor is it possible to predict what would have happened to world capitalism had uneven development been driven 'from below', as in the nineteenth century, rather than 'from above' as under the US Cold War regime. All I am saying in contrast to Brenner's account is that, historically, uneven development after the Second World War was embedded from beginning to end in Cold War rivalries, and was therefore thoroughly shaped by the successes and failures of the strategies and structures deployed by the hegemonic US warfare-welfare state. The intensification of inter-capitalist competition and the associated crisis of profitability were important as a signal that the long postwar boom had reached

¹⁰⁵ Robert McNamara, 'The True Dimension of the Task', *International Development Review*, vol. 1 (1970), pp. 5–6.

its limits. But they were only an element of the broader crisis of hegemony that contemporaneously signalled the limits and contradictions of US Cold War policies.

Financialization and the monetarist counterrevolution

To turn now to the dynamic of the long downturn: my critical assessment of Brenner's account implicitly suggested that the monetarist counterrevolution of 1979–82 was a far more decisive turning point in the evolution of US and world capitalism than either the Plaza Accord of 1985 or the reverse Plaza Accord of 1995, to which Brenner seems to attribute equal or even greater importance. In my view the accords of 1985 and 1995 were moments of adjustment within a process of revival of US hegemony that had begun with the switch from ultra lax to extremely tight monetary policies. Before the switch, the US inflationary management of the crises of profitability and hegemony tended to repel rather than attract the growing mass of capital that sought accumulation through financial channels. Worse still, in spite of the positive effects of the competitiveness of US manufacturers that Brenner emphasizes, they created conditions of accumulation on a world scale that benefited neither the US state nor American capital.

Crucial in this respect was the explosive growth of the Eurodollar and other extraterritorial financial markets. Curiously, Brenner hardly mentions this development, even though it originated in the same years as his transition from boom to downturn and left an indelible mark on the 1970s. Established in the 1950s to hold dollar balances of communist countries unwilling to risk depositing them in the United States, the Eurodollar or eurocurrency market grew primarily through the deposits of US multinationals and the offshore activities of New York banks. Having expanded steadily through the 1950s and early 1960s, it started growing exponentially in the mid- and late-1960s—eurocurrency assets more than quadrupling between 1967 and 1970.¹⁰⁶

Hard as it is to know exactly what lay behind this explosion, it is plausible to suppose that it was triggered by the joint crisis of profitability

¹⁰⁶ Eugène Versluysen, *The Political Economy of International Finance*, New York 1981, pp. 16–22; Marcello de Cecco, 'Inflation and Structural Change in the Euro-dollar Market', *European University Institute Working Papers*, 23 (1982), p. 11; Andrew Walter, *World Power and World Money*, New York 1991, p. 182.

and American hegemony of those years. Although Brenner focuses on US manufacturers producing at home, we know that US corporations operating abroad had also begun to face tougher competition from their European rivals.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, Europe was the epicentre of the pay explosion of 1968–73. Horizontal pressure from intensifying competition and vertical pressure from labour's leverage must have given a major boost to the liquidity preference of US multinational corporations operating abroad. Since conditions for the profitable reinvestment of cash flows in production were even less favourable in the United States than in Europe, as the growing fiscal crisis of the US warfare-welfare state increased the risks of new taxes and restrictions on capital mobility, it made good business sense for American multinationals to 'park' their growing liquid assets in eurocurrency and other offshore money markets rather than repatriate them.

Be that as it may, the explosive growth of eurocurrency markets provided currency speculators—including US banks and corporations—with a huge *masse de manoeuvre* with which to bet against, and thereby undermine, the stability of the US-controlled system of fixed exchange rates. And once that system actually collapsed, the gates were open for an ever-growing mass of privately controlled liquidity to compete with the US and other state actors in the production of world money and credit. Three mutually reinforcing tendencies were at work in this particular competitive struggle.

First, the breakdown of the regime of fixed exchange rates added a new momentum to the financialization of capital, by increasing the risks and uncertainties of commercial-industrial activities. Fluctuations in exchange rates became a major determinant of variations in corporate cash-flow positions, sales, profits and assets in different countries and currencies. In hedging against these variations, or in trying to profit from them, multinationals tended to increase the mass of liquidity deployed in financial speculation in extraterritorial money markets where freedom of action was greatest and specialized services most readily available.¹⁰⁸

Second, combined with the loss of credibility of the United States as global policeman, the massive devaluation of the US currency in the

¹⁰⁷ Alfred Chandler, *Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism*, Cambridge, MA 1990, pp. 615–16.

¹⁰⁸ See, among others, Susan Strange, *Casino Capitalism*, Oxford 1986, pp. 11–13.

early 1970s prompted Third World governments to adopt a more aggressive stance in negotiating the prices of their exports of industrial raw materials—oil in particular. Intensifying inter-capitalist competition and the stepping up of low- and middle-income countries' industrialization efforts had already led to significant increases in these prices before 1973. In 1973, however, the virtual acknowledgment of defeat by the US in Vietnam, followed immediately by the shattering of the myth of Israeli invincibility during the Yom Kippur War, energized OPEC into protecting its members more effectively from the depreciation of the dollar through a four-fold increase in the price of crude oil in just a few months. Coming as it did at the tail end of the pay explosion, this so-called first 'oil shock' deepened the crisis of profitability and strengthened inflationary tendencies in core capitalist countries. More important, it generated an \$80 billion surplus of 'petrodollars', a good part of which was parked or invested in the eurocurrency and other offshore money markets. The mass of privately controlled liquidity that could be mobilized for financial speculation and new credit creation outside publicly controlled channels thereby received an additional powerful stimulus.¹⁰⁹

Finally, the tremendous expansion in the supply of world money and credit, due to the combination of extremely lax US monetary policies and the explosive growth of privately controlled liquidity in offshore money markets, was not matched by demand conditions capable of ensuring the preservation, let alone the self-expansion, of money capital. To be sure, there was plenty of demand for liquidity, not only on the part of multinational corporations—to hedge against or speculate on exchange-rate fluctuations—but also on the part of low- and middle-income countries, to sustain their developmental efforts in an increasingly competitive and volatile environment. For the most part, however, this demand added more to inflationary pressures than it did to the expansion of solvent indebtedness.

Formerly, countries other than the United States had to keep their balance of payments in some sort of equilibrium. They had to 'earn' the money they wished to spend abroad. Now they could borrow it. With liquidity apparently capable of infinite expansion, countries deemed credit-worthy no longer had any external check on foreign spending . . . Under such circumstances, a balance-of-payments deficit no longer provided, in itself, an automatic

¹⁰⁹ Itoh, *World Economic Crisis*, pp. 53–54, 60–68, 116; de Cecco, 'Inflation and Structural Change', p. 12; Strange, *Casino Capitalism*, p. 18.

check to domestic inflation. Countries in deficit could borrow indefinitely from the magic liquidity machine . . . Not surprisingly, world inflation continued accelerating throughout the decade, and fears of collapse in the private banking system grew increasingly vivid. More and more debts were 'rescheduled', and a number of poor countries grew flagrantly insolvent.¹²⁰

In short, the interaction between the crisis of profitability and the crisis of hegemony, in combination with the US inflationary strategy of crisis management, resulted in a ten-year long increase in world monetary disorder, escalating inflation and a steady deterioration in the capacity of the US dollar to function as the world's means of payment, reserve currency, and unit of account. Brenner's narrow focus on profitability in manufacturing misses this broader context of the collapsing monetary foundations of the world capitalist order. What was the point of taking some of the pressure off profits in US manufacturing through lax monetary policies if, in the process, money capital—the beginning and end of capitalist accumulation—was made so abundant as to be a free good? Was not the abuse of US seigniorage privileges in fact chasing capital into alternative monetary means, thereby depriving the US state of one of its main levers of world power?

Crisis of expansion

The root of the problem of US and world capitalism in the 1970s was not low rates of profit as such. After all, the driving down of profit *rates* in the pursuit of a larger *mass* of profits has been a long established tradition of historical capitalism.¹²¹ The real problem throughout the 1970s was that US monetary policies were trying to entice capital to keep world trade and production expanding, even though such an expansion had become the primary cause of rising costs and uncertainty for corporate capital in general, and American corporate capital in particular. Not surprisingly, only a fraction of the liquidity created by the US monetary authorities found its way into new trade and production facilities. Most of it turned into an extraterritorial money supply, which reproduced itself many times over through the mechanisms of private inter-bank money creation, and promptly re-emerged in world markets to compete with the dollars issued by the Federal Reserve.

¹²⁰ David Calleo, *The Imperious Economy*, Cambridge, MA 1982, pp. 137–38.

¹²¹ See, among others, Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, Moscow 1962, pp. 245–6.

In the last resort, this growing competition between private and public money did not benefit the US government, because the expansion of the private supply of dollars set an increasingly large group of countries free from balance of payments constraints, and thereby undermined the seigniorage privileges of Washington. Nor did it benefit US capital, since the expansion of the public supply of dollars fed offshore money markets with more liquidity than could possibly be recycled safely and profitably. It therefore forced the US banks and other financial intermediaries that controlled these markets to compete fiercely with one another in pushing money on countries deemed credit-worthy, and indeed in lowering the standards by which this credit-worthiness was assessed.

Unfolding as it did in the context of a deepening crisis of US hegemony, this mutually destructive competition culminated in the devastating run on the dollar of 1979–80. Whatever the actual motivations and ostensible rationale of the sudden reversal in US monetary policies that followed the run, its true long-term significance—and the main reason why it eventually revived US fortunes beyond anyone's expectation—is that it brought this mutually destructive competition to an abrupt end. Not only did the US government stop feeding the system with liquidity; more importantly, it started to compete aggressively for capital worldwide—through record high interest rates, tax breaks, increasing freedom of action for capitalist producers and speculators and, as the benefits of the new policies materialized, an appreciating dollar—provoking the massive rerouting of capital flows towards the United States discussed earlier on. To put it crudely, the essence of the monetarist counter-revolution was a shift of US state action from the supply side to the demand side of the ongoing financial expansion. Through this shift, the US government stopped competing with the growing private supply of liquidity to create instead brisk demand conditions for the latter's accumulation through financial channels.

The monetarist counterrevolution was not an isolated event but an ongoing process which had to be managed. Brenner's account of inter-state cooperation and competition among the leading capitalist countries in the 1980s and 1990s is particularly useful in highlighting the swings that have characterized this management. Whenever the process threatened to get out of hand and provoke a systemic breakdown, the leading capitalist states cooperated to avert the danger by bringing relief from competitive pressures to the producers most immediately threatened with

collapse—US manufacturers on the eve of the Plaza Accord of 1985; Japanese and, to a lesser extent, Western European manufacturers on the eve of the reverse Plaza Accord of 1995. But once the danger was averted, inter-state competition resumed until the threat of a new breakdown loomed on the horizon. Illuminating as it is, this account does not tell us whether this process has any limits—and if it does, what these might be. This brings us to Brenner's contention concerning the precariousness of the US economic revival of the 1990s, to which we now turn.

Possible outcomes

In general terms, I concur with Brenner's assessment that the US economic revival of the second half of the 1990s did not constitute 'a definitive transcendence of the long downturn'; and that, indeed, the worst may be yet to come. Writing in the early 1990s—before the start of the revival analysed by Brenner, but after the monetarist counter-revolution had already succeeded in transforming the crisis of the 1970s into a new *belle époque* of US and world capitalism—I contended that 'the most striking similarity [between this new *belle époque* and the Edwardian one] has been the almost complete lack of realization on the part of their beneficiaries that the sudden and unprecedented prosperity that they had come to enjoy did not rest on a resolution of the crisis of accumulation that had preceded the beautiful times'. Rather, 'the newly found prosperity rested on a shift of the crisis from one set of relations to another set of relations. It was only a question of time before the crisis would re-emerge in more troublesome forms'.¹²³

There are nonetheless two main differences between Brenner's diagnosis of the crisis of profitability underlying the global turbulence of the last thirty years, and my own. One is that I interpret the crisis of profitability as an aspect of a broader crisis of hegemony. And the other is that I see the financialization of capital, rather than persistent 'over-capacity and over-production' in manufacturing, as the predominant capitalist response to the joint crisis of profitability and hegemony.

One of the advantages of this interpretation is that it enables us to establish comparisons with earlier periods also characterized by a crisis of hegemony/profitability and the financialization of capital, in an attempt

¹²³ *Long Twentieth Century*, p. 324.

to identify possible prospective outcomes of the present crisis in the light of historical experience. This brings us back to the issue raised earlier of whether the present *belle époque* can be expected to end as catastrophically as the preceding one. In bringing this article to a close let me briefly point to reasons why it may and why it may not.

The main reason for anticipating a new debacle is that financial expansions have a fundamentally contradictory impact on systemic stability. In the short run—with the understanding that, in this context, a short run encompasses decades rather than years—financial expansions tend to stabilize the existing order, by enabling incumbent hegemonic groups to shift onto subordinate groups, nationally and internationally, the burdens of the intensifying competition that challenges their hegemony. In the preceding section I have sketched the process through which the US government succeeded in turning the financialization of capital from a factor of crisis for US hegemony—as it was through the 1970s—into a factor of reflation for US wealth and power. Through different mechanisms, analogous—if less spectacular—reversals can be detected not just in the course of the UK-centred financial expansion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but even in the course of the Dutch-centred financial expansion of the mid-eighteenth century.¹³

Over time, however, financial expansions have tended to destabilize the existing order through processes that are as much social and political as they are economic. Economically, such expansions systematically divert purchasing power from demand-creating investment in commodities (including labour power) to hoarding and speculation, thereby exacerbating realization problems. Politically, they tend to be associated with the emergence of new configurations of power, which undermine the capacity of the incumbent hegemonic state to turn to its advantage the system-wide intensification of competition. And socially, the massive redistribution of rewards and the social dislocations entailed by financial expansions tend to provoke movements of resistance and rebellion among subordinate groups and strata, whose established ways of life are coming under attack.

The form that these tendencies take, and the way in which they relate to one another in space and time, have varied from financial expansion

¹³ Arrighi and Silver, *Chaos and Governance*, chapter 1 and Conclusion.

to financial expansion. But some combination of the three tendencies can be detected in each of the two so-far completed hegemonic transitions of historical capitalism—from Dutch to British and from British to US hegemony. In the past transitions (although not yet in the current one), they eventually resulted in a complete and seemingly irremediable breakdown in the system's organization, which was not overcome until the system was reconstituted under a new hegemony.¹⁴

A new systemic breakdown?

The Crash and Great Depression of the 1930s—the only occurrence in the last 150 years that corresponds to Brenner's image of a system-wide shakeout or 'outright depression'—was an integral element of the latest breakdown. The success of the monetarist counterrevolution, in transforming the financial expansion of the 1970s into the driving force of the reflation of US wealth and power of the 1980s and 1990s, is not in itself a guarantee that an analogous systemic breakdown is not again in the making. On the contrary, the very scale and scope of the transformation are probably exacerbating realization problems worldwide to such an extent as to make an 'outright depression' more rather than less likely.¹⁵ This is an important issue, and one to which I would like to return on some other occasion. For the time being, however, let me simply note that, once again, the economics of the situation evolves not in isolation from but in combination with the political and social dimensions of the ongoing transition to a yet unknown destination. And while the economics of the present transition is in key respects similar to that of past transitions—as witnessed by the intensification of inter-capitalist competition and associated financialization of capital—its politics and sociology are quite different.

As previously noted, in the course of the latest long downturn and *belle époque* there has been no tendency—as there was in the course of the

¹⁴ Arrighi and Silver, *Chaos and Governance*, chapters 1, 3 and Conclusion.

¹⁵ In response to a critique by James Crotty, Brenner acknowledges that tight monetary policies exacerbated realization problems in 1969–70; see Crotty, 'Review of *Turbulence in the World Economy* by Robert Brenner', *Challenge*, vol. 42, no. 3, May–June 1999, pp. 108–18, and Brenner's reply, pp. 119–130. Curiously, however, Brenner hardly mentions the much more serious realization problems that have been created by the far more persistent, widespread and tight monetary policies of the 1980s and 1990s.

long downturn and *belle époque* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—towards the transformation of inter-enterprise competition into a world-scale inter-state struggle over territory, with its associated escalation of the armaments race among rising and declining capitalist powers. On the contrary, global military capabilities have become even more centralized in the hands of the United States than they already were, while rising and declining capitalist powers have continued to work towards the consolidation of the unity of the world market. It is of course impossible to tell how this might change, were the increasing realization problems to precipitate a major system-wide depression. For the time being, however, the growing segmentation of the world market that contributed decisively to the economic breakdown of the 1930s does not appear to be a factor in the present transition.

Closely related to the above, the social forces that have shaped and constrained inter-capitalist competition in the late twentieth century are significantly different from those at work in the previous transition. Although the monetarist counterrevolution has been quite successful in undermining the capacity of labour in core regions, and of Southern nations in the world at large, to obtain a larger share of the pie, this success has its own limits and contradictions. Chief among these, as Brenner himself emphasizes, is the fact that the US economic revival of the 1990s, and the continuing dependence of the world economy for its own expansion on a growing US economy, have been based on an increase in US foreign indebtedness that has no precedent in world history. It is hard to see how this situation can be reproduced for any length of time without transforming into an outright tribute, or 'protection payment', the \$1 billion (and counting) that the United States needs *daily* to balance its current accounts with the rest of the world. But it is even harder to envision the kind of system-wide social and political convulsions that are necessary to make the extraction of such a tribute the foundation of a new, and for the first time in history, truly universal world empire.

Towards the end of the *belle époque* of Dutch capitalism in 1778, the periodical *De Borger* wrote: 'Each one says "it will last my time and after me, the delugel!" as our [French] neighbours' proverb has it, which we have taken over in deeds if not in words'.¹⁶ This pretty much sums up the

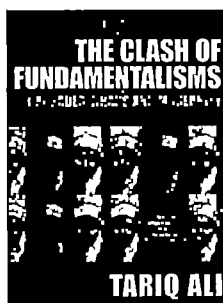
¹⁶ Quoted in Charles Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire 1600-1800*, New York 1965, p. 291.

philosophy that underlies all financial expansions and *belle époques* of historical capitalism, including our own. The main difference between then and now is the incomparably greater power wielded by the declining hegemonic state.

As David Calleo has argued, international systems break down 'not only because unbalanced and aggressive new powers seek to dominate their neighbours but also because declining powers, rather than adjusting and accommodating, try to cement their slipping pre-eminence into an exploitative hegemony'.¹⁷ At the time of the *belle époque* of Dutch capitalism, Dutch world power was already so diminished that the country's resistance to adjustment and accommodation played virtually no role in the subsequent systemic breakdown, in comparison to the aggressive role played by the emerging empire-building national-states, first and foremost Britain and France. Today, in contrast, we have reached the other end of the spectrum. There are no credible aggressive new powers that can provoke the breakdown of the US-centred world system, but the United States has even greater capabilities than Britain did a century ago to convert its declining hegemony into an exploitative domination. If the system eventually breaks down, it will be primarily because of US resistance to adjustment and accommodation.

¹⁷ David Calleo, *Beyond American Hegemony: The Future of the Western Alliance*, New York 1987, p. 142.

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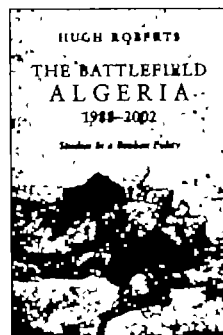
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FRANCO MORETTI

MORE CONJECTURES

IN THE PAST YEAR OR SO, several articles have addressed the issues raised in 'Conjectures on World Literature': Christopher Prendergast, Francesca Orsini, Efraín Kristal and Jonathan Arac in *New Left Review*, Emily Apter and Jale Parla elsewhere.¹ My thanks to all of them; and as I obviously cannot respond to every point in detail, I will focus here on the three main areas of disagreement among us: the (questionable) paradigmatic status of the novel; the relationship between core and periphery, and its consequences for literary form; and the nature of comparative analysis.

I

One must begin somewhere, and 'Conjectures' tried to sketch how the literary world-system works by focusing on the rise of the modern novel: a phenomenon which is easy to isolate, has been studied all the world over, and thus lends itself well to comparative work. I also added that the novel was 'an example, not a model; and of course my example, based on the field I know (elsewhere, things may be very different)'. Elsewhere things are different indeed: 'If the novel can be seen as heavily freighted with the political, this is not patently the case for other literary genres. Drama seems to travel less anxiously... How might the... construct work with lyric poetry?', asks Prendergast; and Kristal: 'Why doesn't poetry follow the laws of the novel?'.²

It doesn't? I wonder. What about Petrarchism? Propelled by its formalized lyrical conventions, Petrarchism spread to (at least) Spain, Portugal, France, England, Wales, the Low Countries, the German territories, Poland, Scandinavia, Dalmatia (and, according to Roland Greene, the New World). As for its depth and duration, I am sceptical about the

old Italian claim that by the end of the sixteenth century over two hundred *thousand* sonnets had been written in Europe in imitation of Petrarch; still, the main disagreement seems to be, not on the enormity of the facts, but on the enormity of their enormity—ranging from a century (Navarrete, Fucilla), to two (Manero Sorolla, Kennedy), three (Hoffmeister, Kristal himself), or five (Greene). Compared to the wave-like diffusion of this '*lingua franca* for love poets', as Hoffmeister calls it, western novelistic '*realism*' looks like a rather ephemeral vogue.³

Other things being equal, anyway, I would imagine literary movements to depend on three broad variables—a genre's potential market, its overall formalization and its use of language—and to range from the rapid wave-like diffusion of forms with a large market, rigid formulas and simplified style (say, adventure novels), to the relative stasis of those characterized by a small market, deliberate singularity and linguistic density (say, experimental poetry). Within this matrix, novels would be representative, not of the *entire* system, but of its most mobile strata, and by concentrating only on them we would probably overstate the mobility

¹ 'Conjectures on World Literature', NLR 1; Christopher Prendergast, 'Negotiating World Literature', NLR 8; Francesca Orsini, 'Maps of Indian Writing', NLR 13; Efraim Kristal, "Considering Coldly . . .": A Response to Franco Moretti', NLR 15; Jonathan Arac, 'Anglo-Globalism?' NLR 16; Emily Apter, 'Global *Translator*: The "Invention" of Comparative Literature, Istanbul, 1933', *Critical Inquiry*, 29, 2003; Jale Parla's essay ('The object of comparison') will be published in a special issue of *Comparative Literature Studies* edited by Djelal Kadir in January 2004.

² 'Conjectures', p. 58; 'Negotiating World Literature', pp. 120–1; "Considering Coldly . . .", p. 62. Orsini makes a similar point for Indian literature: 'Moretti's novel-based theses would seem to have little application to the Subcontinent, where the major nineteenth and twentieth-century forms have been poetry, drama and the short story, whose evolution may show quite different patterns of change': 'Maps', p. 79.

³ See Antero Meozzi, *Il petrarchismo europeo (secolo XVI)*, Pisa 1934; Leonard Forster, *The Icy Fire: Five studies in European Petrarchism*, Cambridge 1969; Joseph Fucilla, *Estudios sobre el petrarquismo en España*, Madrid 1960; Ignacio Navarrete, *Orphans of Petrarch*, California 1994; William Kennedy, *Authorizing Petrarch*, Ithaca 1994; Maria Pilar Manero Sorolla, *Introducción al estudio del petrarquismo en España*, Barcelona 1987; Gerhart Hoffmeister, *Petrarchistische Lyrik*, Stuttgart 1973; Roland Greene, *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence*, Princeton 1991. Kristal's implicit acknowledgement of the hegemony of Petrarchism over European and Latin American poetry comes where he writes that 'the lyrical conventions of modern Spanish poetry were developed in the 16th century by Boscán and Garcilaso de la Vega . . . The first signs of a reaction against the strictest conventions of Spanish prosody did not take place in Spain but in Spanish America in the 1830s': "Considering Coldly . . .", p. 64.

of world literature. If 'Conjectures' erred in that direction it was a mistake, easily corrected as we learn more about the international diffusion of drama, poetry and so on (here, Donald Sassoon's current work on cultural markets will be invaluable).⁴ Truth be told, I would be very disappointed if all of literature turned out to 'follow the laws of the novel': that a single explanation may work *everywhere* is both very implausible and extraordinarily boring. But before indulging in speculations at a more abstract level, we must learn to share the significant facts of literary history across our specialized niches. Without collective work, world literature will always remain a mirage.

II

Is world-system theory, with its strong emphasis on a rigid international division of labour, a good model for the study of world literature? On this, the strongest objection comes from Kristal: 'I am arguing, however, in favour of a view of world literature', he writes, 'in which the West does not have a monopoly over the creation of forms that count; in which themes and forms can move in several directions—from the centre to the periphery, from the periphery to the centre, from one periphery to another, while some original forms of consequence may not move much at all'.⁵

Yes, forms *can* move in several directions. But *do* they? This is the point, and a theory of literary history should reflect on the constraints on their movements, and the reasons behind them. What I know about European novels, for instance, suggests that hardly any forms 'of consequence' don't move at all; that movement from one periphery to another (without passing through the centre) is almost unheard of;⁶ that movement from the periphery to the centre is less rare, but still quite unusual,

⁴ See, for a preliminary account, 'On Cultural Markets', NLR 17.

⁵ "Considering Coldly . . .", pp. 73-4.

⁶ I mean here the movement between peripheral cultures which do not belong to the same 'region': from, say, Norway to Portugal (or vice versa), not from Norway to Iceland or Sweden, or from Colombia to Guatemala and Peru. Sub-systems made relatively homogeneous by language, religion or politics—of which Latin America is the most interesting and powerful instance—are a great field for comparative study, and may add interesting complications to the larger picture (like Darío's modernism, evoked by Kristal).

while that from the centre to the periphery is by far the most frequent.⁷ Do these facts imply that the West has 'a monopoly over the creation of the forms that count'? Of course not.⁸ Cultures from the centre have more resources to pour into innovation (literary and otherwise), and are thus more likely to produce it: but a monopoly over creation is a theological attribute, not an historical judgment.⁹ The model proposed in

⁷ The reason why literary products flow from the centre to the periphery is spelt out by Even-Zohar in his work on polysystems, extensively quoted at the beginning of 'Conjectures': peripheral (or, as he calls them, 'weak') literatures 'often do not develop the same full range of literary activities . . . observable in adjacent larger literatures (which in consequence may create a feeling that they are indispensable)'; 'a weak . . . system is unable to function by confining itself to its home repertoire only', and the ensuing lack 'may be filled, wholly or partly, by translated literature'. Literary weakness, Even-Zohar goes on, 'does not necessarily result from political or economic weakness, although rather often it seems to be correlated with material conditions'; as a consequence, 'since peripheral literatures in the Western hemisphere tend more often than not to be identical with literatures of smaller nations, as unpalatable as this idea may seem to us, we have no choice but to admit that within a group of relatable national literatures, such as the literatures of Europe, hierarchical relations have been established since the very beginnings of these literatures. Within this (macro-)polysystem some literatures have taken peripheral positions, which is only to say that they were often modelled to a large extent upon an exterior literature.' Itamar Even-Zohar, 'Polysystem Studies', in *Poetics Today*, spring 1990, pp. 47, 81, 80, 48.

⁸ Nor does it have a monopoly over criticism that counts. Of the twenty critics on whose work the argument of 'Conjectures' rests, writes Arac, 'one is quoted in Spanish, one in Italian, and eighteen in English'; so, 'the impressive diversity of surveying some twenty national literatures diminishes into little more than one single means by which they may be known. English in culture, like the dollar in economics, serves as the medium through which knowledge may be translated from the local to the global': 'Anglo-Globalism?', p. 40. True, eighteen critics are quoted in English. But as far as I know only four or five are from the country of the dollar, while the others belong to a dozen different cultures. Is this less significant than the language they use? I doubt it. Sure, global English may end up impoverishing our thinking, as American films do. But for now, the rapid wide public exchanges it makes possible far exceed its potential dangers. Parla puts it well: 'To unmask the hegemony [of imperialism] is an intellectual task. It does not harm to know English as one sets out for the task.'

⁹ After all, my last two books end on the formal revolutions of Russian and Latin American narrative—a point also made (not 'conceded', as Kristal puts it, suggesting reluctance on my part) in an article on European literature ('an importer of those formal novelties that it is no longer capable of producing'), another one on Hollywood exports ('a counter-force at work within the world literary system') and in 'Conjectures' itself. See 'Modern European Literature: A Geographical Sketch', NLR 1/206, July–August 1994, p. 109; 'Planet Hollywood', NLR 9, May–June 2001, p. 101.

'Conjectures' does not reserve invention to a few cultures and deny it to the others: it specifies *the conditions under which it is more likely to occur*, and the forms it may take. Theories will never abolish inequality: they can only hope to explain it.

III

Kristal also objects to what he calls the 'postulate of a general homology between the inequalities of the world economic and literary systems': in other words, 'the assumption that literary and economic relationships run parallel may work in some cases, but not in others'.¹⁰ Even-Zohar's argument is a partial response to the objection; but there is another sense in which Kristal is right, and the simplifying euphoria of an article originally conceived as a 30-minute talk is seriously misleading. By reducing the literary world-system to core and periphery, I erased from the picture the transitional area (the semi-periphery) where cultures move in and out of the core; as a consequence, I also understated the fact that in many (and perhaps most) instances, material and intellectual hegemony are indeed very close, but not quite identical.

Let me give some examples. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the long struggle for hegemony between Britain and France ended with Britain's victory on all fronts—except one: in the world of narrative, the verdict was reversed, and French novels were both more successful and formally more significant than British ones. Elsewhere I have tried to explain the reasons for the morphological supremacy of German tragedy from the mid-eighteenth century on; or the key role of semi-peripheral realities in the production of modern epic forms. Petrarchism, which reached its international zenith when its wealthy area of origin had already catastrophically declined (like those stars which are still shining long after their death), is a particularly spooky instance of this state of affairs.

All these examples (and more) have two features in common. First, they arise from cultures which are close to, or inside the core of the

'Conjectures' pointed out that 'in those rare instances when the impossible programme succeeds, we have genuine formal revolutions' (p. 59, footnote 9), and that 'in a few lucky cases, the structural weakness may turn into a strength, as in Schwarz's interpretation of Machado' (p. 66, footnote 29).

¹⁰ "Considering Coldly . . .", pp. 69, 73.

system—but are not hegemonic in the economic sphere. France may be the paradigm here, as if being an eternal second in the political and economic arena encouraged investment in culture (as in its feverish post-Napoleonic creativity, compared to the postprandial somnolence of the victorious Victorians). A—limited—discrepancy between material and literary hegemony does therefore exist: wider in the case of innovation *per se* (which does not require a powerful apparatus of production and distribution), and narrower, or absent, in the case of diffusion (which does).²¹ Yet, and this is the second feature in common, all these examples confirm the inequality of the world literary system: an inequality which does not coincide with economic inequality, true, and allows some mobility—but a mobility *internal* to the unequal system, not alternative to it. At times, even the dialectic between semi-periphery and core may actually widen the overall gap (as in the instances mentioned in footnote 11, or when Hollywood quickly ‘remakes’ successful foreign films, effectively strengthening its own position). At any rate, this is clearly another field where progress will only be possible through the good coordination of specific local knowledge.

IV

The central morphological point of ‘Conjectures’ was the contrast between the rise of the novel in the core as an ‘autonomous development’, and the rise in the periphery as a ‘compromise’ between a

²¹ The fact that innovations may arise in the semi-periphery, but then be captured and diffused by the core of the core, emerges from several studies on the early history of the novel (by Armstrong, Resina, Trumpener and others: all written in total independence from world-system theory), which have pointed out how often the culture industry of London and Paris discovers a foreign form, introduces a few improvements, and then retails it as its own throughout Europe (ending in the masterstroke of the ‘English’ novelist Walter Scott). As the picaresque declines in its native country, Gil Blas and Moll Flanders and Marianne and Tom Jones spread it all over Europe; epistolary novels, first written in Spain and Italy, become a continental craze thanks to Montesquieu and Richardson (and then Goethe); American ‘captivity narratives’ acquire international currency through *Clarissa* and the Gothic; the Italian ‘melodramatic imagination’ conquers the world through Parisian *feuilletons*; the German *Bildungsroman* is intercepted by Stendhal, Balzac, Dickens, Brontë, Flaubert, Eliot . . . This is of course not the only path of literary innovation, perhaps not even the main one; but the mechanism is certainly there—half swindle, half international division of labour—and has an interesting similarity to larger economic constraints.

Western influence and local materials. As Parla and Arac point out, however, early English novels were written, in Fielding's words, 'after the manner of Cervantes' (or of someone else), thus making clear that a compromise between local and foreign forms occurred there as well.¹² And if this was the case, then there was no 'autonomous development' in western Europe, and the idea that forms have, so to speak, a *different history* at the core and at the periphery crumbles. The world-system model may be useful at other levels, but has no explanatory power at the level of form.

Here things are easy. Parla and Arac are right—and I should have known better. After all, the thesis that literary form is *always* a compromise between opposite forces has been a Leitmotiv of my intellectual formation, from Francesco Orlando's Freudian aesthetics to Gould's 'Panda principle', or Lukács' conception of realism. How on earth could I 'forget' all this? In all likelihood, because the core/periphery opposition made me look (or wish . . .) for a parallel morphological pattern, which I then couched in the wrong conceptual terms.¹³

So let me try again. 'Probably all systems known to us have emerged and developed with interference playing a prominent role', writes Even-Zohar: 'there is not one single literature which did not emerge through interference with a more established literature: and no literature could manage without interference at one time or another during its history'.¹⁴ No literature without interference . . . hence, also, no literature without compromises between the local and the foreign. But does this mean that all types of interference and compromise *are the same*? Of course not: the picaresque, captivity narratives, even the *Bildungsroman* could not exert the same pressure over French or British novelists that the historical novel or the *mystères* exerted over European and Latin American writers: and we should find a way to express this difference. To recognize when a

¹² 'Anglo-Globalism?', p. 38.

¹³ This seems a good illustration of the 'Kuhnian' point that theoretical expectations will shape facts according to your wishes—and an even better illustration of the 'Popperian' point that facts (usually gathered by those who disagree with you) will be finally stronger.

¹⁴ 'Polysystem Studies', p. 59. A page later, in a footnote, Even-Zohar adds: 'This is true of almost all literatures of the Western hemisphere. As for the Eastern hemisphere, admittedly, Chinese is still a riddle as regards its emergence and early development.'

compromise occurs as it were *under duress*, and is thus likely to produce more unstable and dissonant results—what Zhao calls the ‘uneasiness’ of the late Qing narrator.

The key point, here, is this: if there is a strong, systematic constraint exerted by some literatures over the others (and we all seem to agree that there is),¹⁵ then we should be able to recognize its effects *within literary form itself*: because forms are indeed, in Schwarz’s words, ‘the abstract of specific social relationships’. In ‘Conjectures’, the diagram of forces was embodied in the sharp qualitative opposition of ‘autonomous developments’ and ‘compromises’; but as that solution has been falsified, we must try something else. And, yes, ‘measuring’ the extent of foreign pressure on a text, or its structural instability, or a narrator’s uneasiness, will be complicated, at times even unfeasible. But a diagram of symbolic power is an ambitious goal, and it makes sense that it would be hard to achieve.

V

Two areas for future discussion emerge from all this. The first concerns the type of knowledge literary history should pursue. ‘No science, no laws’ is Arac’s crisp description of Auerbach’s project; and there are similar hints in other articles too. This is of course the old question of whether the proper object of historical disciplines are individual cases or abstract models; and as I will argue at extravagant length for the latter in a series of forthcoming articles, here I will simply say that we have a lot to learn from the methods of the social and of the natural sciences. Will we then find ourselves, in Apter’s words, ‘in a city of bits, where micro and macro literary units are awash in a global system with no obvious sorting device’? I hope so . . . it would be a very interesting universe.

¹⁵ Except Orsini: ‘Implicit in [Casanova’s] view—explicit in Moretti’s—is the traditional assumption of a “source” language, or culture—invariably carrying an aura of authenticity—and a “target” one, seen as in some way imitative. In place of this, Lydia Liu much more usefully proposed the concept of “guest” and “host” languages, to focus attention on the translingual practice through which the hosts may appropriate concepts and forms . . . Cultural influence becomes a study of appropriation, rather than of centres and peripheries’. ‘Maps’, pp. 81–2. The culture industry as a ‘guest’ invited by a ‘host’ who ‘appropriates’ its forms . . . Are these concepts—or daydreams?

So, let's start looking for good sorting devices. 'Formalism without close reading', Arac calls the project of 'Conjectures', and I can't think of a better definition. Hopefully, it will also be a formalism where the 'details' so dear to him and to Prendergast will be highlighted, not erased by models and 'schemas'.¹⁶

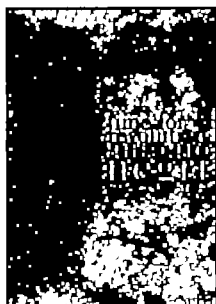
Finally, politics. Several articles mention the political pressure behind Auerbach's *Mimesis*, or Casanova's *République mondiale des lettres*. To them I would add Lukács's two versions of comparative literature: the one which crystallized around World War I, when *The Theory of the Novel*, and its (never completed) companion study on Dostoevsky mused on whether a world beyond capitalism could even still be imagined; and the one which took shape in the Thirties, as a long meditation on the opposite political significance of German and French literature (with Russia again in the background). Lukács' spatio-temporal horizon was narrow (the nineteenth century, and three European literatures, plus Cervantes in *The Theory of the Novel* and Scott in *The Historical Novel*); his answers were often opaque, scholastic, philistine—or worse. But his lesson lies in how the articulation of his comparative scenario (western Europe or Russia; Germany or France) is simultaneously an attempt to understand the great political dilemmas of his day. Or in other words: *the way we imagine comparative literature is a mirror of how we see the world*. 'Conjectures' tried to do so against the background of the unprecedented possibility that the entire world may be subject to a single centre of power—and a centre which has long exerted an equally unprecedented symbolic hegemony. In charting an aspect of the pre-history of our present, and sketching some possible outcomes, the article may well have overstated its case, or taken some wrong turns altogether. But the relationship between project and background stands, and I believe it will give significance and seriousness to our work in the future. Early March 2003, when these pages are being written, is in this respect a wonderfully paradoxical moment, when, after twenty years of unchallenged American hegemony, millions of people everywhere in the world have expressed their enormous distance from American politics. As human beings, this is cause to rejoice. As cultural historians, it is cause to reflect.

¹⁶ 'Anglo-Globalism?', pp. 41, 38; 'Global *translatio*', p. 255.

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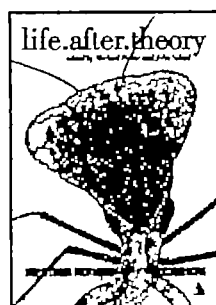


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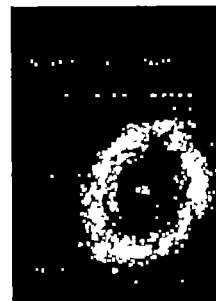
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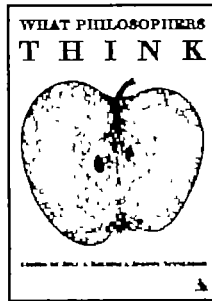


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QIN HUI

DIVIDING THE BIG FAMILY ASSETS

Could you say something about your background?

I WAS BORN AND grew up in Nanning, capital of Guangxi in south-west China, where my parents worked in the education bureau of the provincial administration. Both had been activists in the student movement against Chiang Kai-Shek's regime in Guilin, where my father was a local student at the Normal College. My mother had arrived as a refugee from Zhejiang in 1937. Both were members of the Democratic Alliance, a small party of intellectuals close to the CCP. In the early 1950s, they unsuccessfully applied for Party membership, and in 1957 were lucky to escape the Anti-Rightist campaign. Under their influence I became interested in political and intellectual issues early on. I can remember listening to broadcasts of the CCP's *Nine Open Letters to the CPSU* in the early 1960s, when I was only ten. I could recite by heart the entire text of some of those polemical exchanges of the Sino-Soviet dispute.

I finished elementary school in 1966, the year the Cultural Revolution broke out. I spent the next three years nominally in middle school, but since teaching was suspended, there were no classes and my class-mates and I were on the loose. When the first round of Red Guards—aimed not against 'capitalist roaders', but at the 'five black castes'—was formed in our school, I was excluded due to my 'non-red' family background. However, as elsewhere in China, this first rash of Red Guards was soon overtaken by a broader wave of youths responding to Mao's call to rebel, and in the mushrooming of further Red Guard organizations later that year, I quickly joined a dissident group, as one of its youngest members.

Initially attracting neither supervision nor attention, a few of us started to run a newsletter that became widely read. This was a very exciting experience for me, increasing my self-confidence. By early 1967, a new phase saw the consolidation of various smaller groups into two big opposing Red Guard organizations. That was the beginning of a conflict that led to some of the bloodiest battles of the Cultural Revolution.

Soon Guangxi became famous throughout China for the violent struggles among different factions of its Red Guards, which eventually burst into a full civil war. This was partly because Guangxi was the only region in the country where the provincial party secretary held onto power through the Cultural Revolution—everywhere else they were toppled. But Guangxi controls the supply routes to Vietnam, where the war with America was then at its height, and the local party secretary, Wei Guoqing, enjoyed excellent relations with the Vietnamese Party across the border, so Mao did not want him removed. Our faction battled against Wei in 1967 and 1968. Our base was mainly in a poor district of the city. Here I had eye-opening lessons in sociology. Our supporters were marginalized poor city-dwellers, who did not pay much attention to our ideological rhetoric, but voiced with great energy their accumulated grievances against government officials. Economic activities in our 'liberated areas' were also far from 'planned'. Rather, the ghetto part of the district was full of stalls and street vendors. When we students were at one point considering surrender after the Central Cultural Revolution Group leadership in Beijing announced unequivocal support for our opponents, the poor wanted to fight on. They included port and ferry workers on the Yong River, whom the faction led by Wei accused of being a *lumpen*-proletariat, closer to a mafia than a modern industrial working class. The contrast between the rhetorical slogans of rival student factions and the actual social divisions between the groups that rallied behind them was striking, too, in Guilin, where I travelled in the winter of 1967. There, unlike in Nanning, our faction held municipal power, while most of the poor supported Wei's faction, and resisted efforts to bring them to heel. In effect, ordinary people tended to support the weaker side in these conflicts—whoever was out of power—and once they had made their choice were also more resolute than students in fighting to the end.

The final show-down came in the summer of 1968, when Mao launched a campaign to bring a halt to the nationwide chaos before the Ninth

Party Congress in early 1969. In Guangxi, Wei and his allies mobilized some 100,000 troops and militants to crush the opposition, greatly outnumbering our group. There was heavy fighting in Nanning, where our people were barricaded in an old district of the city, with no more than a hundred rifles between us. Both poor city-dwellers and port workers suffered heavy losses, as did the students who stayed with them. Twenty of my schoolmates were killed in the siege. I was lucky to escape: just before the show-down, I had gone to my mother's home town in Zhejiang, so was away when the attack was launched. When I came back, our middle school, like all other work units and street committees in Nanning, was consolidating the regime's victory by setting up a new student organization under official control, ostensibly still with the name of Red Guards. The after-effects of the fighting were strong in this new organization and I did not become a member of it. But all students were mobilized to conduct 'voluntary' work to clean up the streets, many of which had been entirely levelled, in scenes reminiscent of *The Defence of Stalingrad*.

What happened after the repression in Nanning?

I was given the opportunity of continuing my 'education' for another two years. That I declined, with my parents' support. So I was sent with a mass of other youngsters to be resettled in the countryside. In 1969 I arrived in Tianlin County—in the mountainous corner of Guangxi, bordering Yunnan to the west and Guizhou to the north—to overcome the division between mental and manual labour by working with peasants. The regional district capital is Bose, where Deng raised the flag of the Guangxi Soviet in 1930. This is a Zhuang minority area, where the population speaks a language more closely related to Thai than Chinese. Three of us, all boys, were dispatched to a tiny village of eleven families, from which we had to walk a 60 li, or 20 mile, mountain trail to reach a highway—usually at night, to avoid paying for board and lodging—to catch a truck to visit the county town, some sixty miles away. Many villagers never got to Tianlin County town in their life. Five years later, I was transferred with a dozen other students to a larger village of seventy households. In Tianlin life was very hard, because of the poverty of the people, even though the land is so fertile that one should be able to survive on wild fruit and plants, without even working too much. The staple food crop is corn. What poverty meant to the peasants was their virtually complete lack of money. Yet, in this region of natural subsistence,

the Great Leap Forward had managed to create mass starvation by taking too many people off the land to 'produce steel' and not allowing them back. Every village in our commune had people who had starved to death around 1959. There is no question that the famine was a consequence of the social system rather than a natural disaster.

What were your relations like with the peasants?

I spent five years in the first village and four years in the second, the only one among sent-down youths in our commune to stay for nine years altogether. After almost two decades, when our group went back to visit the villages, I was the only one still able to communicate with the locals in Zhuang. The years in the countryside formed me deeply, but it doesn't mean I had the best relations in my cohort with the villagers. It wasn't that I looked down on them. Rather, I had a pre-set ideological belief that they would be ideal teachers to reform my petty bourgeois outlook. However, peasants in reality were no sages. People who worshipped them would no more be able to make friends with villagers than those who discriminated against them. By contrast, some of our group mixed easily with peasants, each entertaining the other with dirty jokes or sharing gossip, even if behind their backs they might dismiss them as blinkered or stupid. For me, these were all superficial phenomena: what I was looking for was the 'essence' of poor peasants. Unfortunately, the villagers rarely showed their 'essence', except in organized political study sessions.

My good relations with the villagers came mainly from my intention to transform myself into a 'real'—and model—peasant. When they were reluctant to be drafted for infrastructural labour away from home, I'd always volunteer to go. Though I had resolved to be truly independent, declining my parents' offer to send me parcels, I did ask my family to get medicine for the village. So the peasants eventually took to me. When I finally left—the last sent-down youth to go back to the cities—most families in the village had someone come to see me off. No one wept, but they expressed their respect for me. Frankly speaking, though I worked very hard for nine years, I never became really intimate with poor peasants. I say this, because nowadays people often jump to the conclusion that I study rural society because of my connexion to that past. While it is certainly true that first-hand experience of the countryside affected my later research, I believe my studies are inspired by reason rather

than sentiment. It is not accurate to say that I am a fighter for peasant interests. As a scholar, I cannot run for a position in a peasant union or a village committee. What I do is merely try to help peasants acquire and exercise the civil rights, such as the right to organize, that would allow them to protect their own interests. The material interest of peasants is not always the same as my own. What we have in common is an interest in civil rights. These are of concern to intellectuals, peasants, workers and others as well. I don't regard myself just as a spokesman for peasant interests.

What about your intellectual development in these years?

I had something of a reputation as a bookworm among the villagers. My reading was very wide, including practical works on medicine, agricultural machinery, water and electricity supply, and other rural technologies. Knowledge of these subjects enabled me to help solve many problems in village life. In my last three years, I also did some work for the county cultural bureau. There I developed a keen interest in local Zhuang customs and culture, collected folk songs and improved my anthropological knowledge of the Zhuang as a distinctive ethnic group. More importantly, I kept up my interest in social theories during this period. Due to the remoteness of our county, no one there cared much what I was reading. I learnt how to read English on my own, with the help of the Chinese pin-yin system, a deaf and dumb method that stood me in good stead for many years to come.

Most of my books I had brought from home, but another major source was the county library in Tianlin. Since not many people were reading at that time, and regulations were few, I could borrow books whenever we got leave to go there. In the 1960s the government had printed a series of titles for 'internal circulation' only, as material for its ideological campaign against Soviet revisionism. But since no one else was interested in them in Tianlin, I not only read them carefully but also took some of these volumes away with me. My copy of *The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR* by the American scholar Naum Jasny was printed in August 1965. Another title was *The New Class*, by Milovan Djilas. My case was not such a rarity. In the last years of the Cultural Revolution, many Chinese had their eyes opened by works analysing the Soviet system. We could easily relate what we read to what we were experiencing. But these books didn't change my faith in Communism. In fact I became a Party member while

in the countryside and remained an ardent Communist, without any doubts about the system, throughout my youth.

What did you do after your time in the villages?

Since no entrance examinations had been offered for a decade during the Cultural Revolution, universities had to recruit both undergraduates and post-graduates from scratch, in a single year, after the fall of the Gang of Four. The year 1978 was a significant one for the whole family. Within a month, my parents—who had also been sent to the countryside, in another county—came back to Nanning. My sister was admitted to college after passing the newly resumed entrance exams. And I was accepted for graduate studies at Lanzhou University in Gansu province, in the far north-west of China. So I went straight from elementary school to post-graduate work, skipping middle school and undergraduate stages—a career made possible, of course, only by the Cultural Revolution. After such a long time in the villages, I had a tremendous drive to study that absorbed me so completely that I never took a vacation till I got my master's degree three years later.

What drew you to northwest China?

I chose Lanzhou University to do my graduate study because Professor Zhao Lisheng had been exiled there as a Rightist since the 1950s. My reading had convinced me that he was the best historian of land tenure and peasant wars in China. I wanted to work under him and had sent him some try-out essays from my village. Class analysis of land tenure and rent relations, and of social struggles erupting into peasant wars, were the traditional themes of Marxist studies of the peasantry, although earlier Chinese Marxist historians had not concerned themselves with these conflicts. In fact, it was Chinese Trotskyists who had published a two-volume *Study on the History of Chinese Peasant Wars* in the early 1930s, without much response or sequel. In the 1950s, after Liberation, Zhao Lisheng had been responsible for laying the foundations of the modern study of peasant wars in China. This was a 'New Historiography' inspired by Marxism, with a great deal of energy and vitality in both empirical research and social criticism. By the 1970s, though, it was mainly the old paradigms that rekindled people's interest, without much thought-provoking effect. It was concern over these developments in the field that drew Zhao and myself together, but after I got to the university

we both gave up our interest in the 'theoretical' debates of the time and turned to empirical studies. We wanted to map out the social visions animating peasant rebellions—naturally, neither scientific socialism nor capitalism—and believed our research had to be primarily empirical, to judge existing paradigms with a necessary distance.

This preoccupation directed my attention to an area in what is today Yunnan and Sichuan where, during the seventeenth-century transition between Ming and Qing rule, a rebel peasant regime set up a military production system, replacing patriarchal social organization with an equal distribution of land and its produce. In contrast to the majority of studies of the Taiping rebellion, for example, my research relied less on official decrees or programmes and more on records documenting how economic activities were conducted in this patriarchal version of 'public ownership' in a small-peasant economy. Two long research papers came out of this master's thesis. In the early 1980s I took up a teaching job at Shaanxi Normal University in the venerable city of Xi'an. I was still searching for new paradigms to understand the long history of the peasant economy. The traditional Communist explanation of peasant wars in ancient China synthesized them into the formula: 'rent relations: land appropriation: peasant rebellion', in which the emphasis fell on rental and property conflicts between landowners and peasant tenants, conceived as class struggles; state repression was theorized as an extension of the political power of the landowners. However, what I found on studying the record of peasant uprisings across China was the reverse of this sequence. The main body of peasant armies was not made up of tenants but of well-to-do villagers or even small landlords who could not take state exploitation any longer. The division between the powerful and the powerless was the primary factor, rather than issues of land ownership.

This hypothesis received further support in my research on the rural economy of the Guanzhong plain in central Shaanxi. There I found a 'landlord-less feudalism', where small peasants were subordinated directly to a traditional power structure. The upper class exploited the peasantry, not through its position as proprietors of land or capital, but via the state, which operated as a kind of omni-community ruling the whole population through its tax-registration system. The point for me here was not to dispute definitions of feudalism, but to re-examine the key concepts of the theoretical paradigm that had long dominated our field.

This interest led me towards a comparative study of the Warring States–Qin–Han period in China, from 475 BC to 220 AD, and the Graeco-Roman epoch in the West. I pointed out that rent relations and tenancy were far more highly developed in the Roman Empire than in China under the Han—although the two shared many similarities in credit relations, which were strikingly different from the high-interest loans of Medieval Europe or the Tang period. I felt that many of our underlying concepts contained assumptions imported from studies of Western Antiquity, which did not really fit the Chinese evidence. At the same time, I also assessed current Western interpretations of the Graeco-Roman economy and proposed alternative models for understanding it.

In retrospect, I did not pay enough attention to economic intervention by the autocratic state, exemplified by the extraordinary capacity of the Qin–Han administration to mobilize human resources on a huge scale for imperial projects. Here the Han dynasty was closer to the Byzantine than to the Roman empire. The ‘de-clanification’ unleashed by the Qin and Han did not mean that ties of kinship were eroded by any individual rights of the citizen, but that the autocratic state crushed kin rights. The process was comparable to the way Byzantine imperial power dismantled Roman lineage rights. The Roman law that was codified out of Byzantine practice, though apparently quite ‘modern’ in its purge of the lineage residues of the Roman Republic, actually moved farther away from notions of citizenship and closer to the norms of an Oriental despotism. The dissolution of local communities under the Qin and Han also took the authoritarian state, not the individual, as its standard. This was a liquidation of patriarchy that led in the opposite direction from a civil society.

Do you feel your intellectual development benefited from the opening up of the 1980s? More generally, what is your view of that period?

Retrospectively, you could say I benefited. My career proceeded quite smoothly, as I climbed the academic ladder from lector to professor, but in terms of intellectual stimulus or inspiration, I was very disenchanted at the time. By the late 1980s, interest in peasant history had rapidly declined. Conservative scholars were now turning back to traditional dynastic studies, while others were caught up in the ever-hotter ‘culture fever’ of the time, making all kinds of generic comparisons

between 'East and West', in which culture became a vector of national character rather than a historical or social phenomenon. Dwelling on differences between 'China and the West' became a way of minimizing differences between past and present, elite and masses, power holders and commoners within China. Of course, I acknowledge that the 'culture fever' of the 1980s, like the May Fourth New Culture Movement of the late 1910s, was a significant moment of intellectual enlightenment. But whereas in the May Fourth period there was a vigorous clash of various 'isms', now all people could talk about was 'culture', to a point where many modern notions like liberal democracy or social democracy were obfuscated by being bundled into 'Western culture'. Consequently, there was no real debate between opposite positions as occurred in the aftermath of the May Fourth period, particularly between conservative and radical standpoints.

Symptomatic of the emptiness of the period was the substitution in my own field of the 'tenancy-rent relationship' paradigm by visions of a 'harmonious village community', its ethos protected by the resistance of the local gentry to the penetration of the imperial state. But if the 'traditional' local community was so harmonious, how do we explain the large-scale peasant wars that repeatedly exploded in China and notably disrupted its socio-political and economic life? This led me to reconsider my understanding of peasant society in general. I started by looking afresh at Marxist theories of peasant society and the practice of Russian Social Democrats, from Plekhanov to Lenin, while surveying Anglophone work in the field: Teodor Shanin; the debates between James Scott and Samuel Popkin on 'moral' versus 'rational' peasants in Southeast Asia; Philip Huang on the involution of the Chinese agrarian economy. In 1985 I began exploring the Russian tradition of peasant studies represented by Chayanov, collaborating with my wife Jin Yan, a specialist in Eastern Europe—we organized a translation of his 1925 *Peasant Economic Organization* into Chinese. Our *Mir, Reform and Revolution—Nongcun gongshe, gaige yu geming*—was published in 1996. This new direction took me out of narrowly defined peasant studies towards a broader perspective on Chinese history.

So, even while I was disenchanted by shifts in my own field in the 1980s, my own intellectual development was certainly in debt to this period. It was, after all, a very lively time, with an enlightening atmosphere everywhere. Politically, most people were optimistic about the future of

reforms, and I myself still believed in the system and its capacity to change itself for the better.

What changed your political outlook?

The social movement of 1989 altered everything. Xi'an was soon affected by the unrest in Beijing. But for about a month, as students started their boycott of classes, teachers were drawn into the uproar, and there was increasing commotion everywhere, I was so bent on my own work that I didn't take much notice. I remember that on May 16th, as the wave of protest against the government reached its peak, I went as usual to the classroom with my briefcase, amid an entirely deserted campus. On May 20th martial law was declared, and a curfew imposed. In the following days, students were extremely disappointed not to be able to locate radical intellectuals who had been active up to May 20th. Then the provincial Party committee endorsed martial law and ordered every Party member to express their support of it. I could no longer stay silent. On May 24th I composed a statement of protest and went with some other local Party members to put it up as a big-character poster, denouncing the imposition of martial law and removal of Zhao Ziyang as Secretary General of the Party as violations of the CCP's constitution. Reaffirming the democratic rights of Party members, the poster gave the 'Four Cardinal Principles' of the CCP an anti-authoritarian rather than anti-liberal twist—demanding 'insistence on collective leadership against personal totalitarianism; insistence on socialism against feudalism; insistence on Marxism against medieval-style Inquisition; and insistence on the people's democratic dictatorship against dictatorship over the people'.

Thus I got involved in a movement that already seemed doomed for defeat. The poster became quite influential in Xi'an. Then came the crack-down of June 4th. In Xi'an demonstrations and civil resistance against the repression lasted till June 10th. These events were a watershed for me. In a long essay on the social movement of 1989, Wang Hui has recently argued that the movement was attached to the values of the socialist past and opposed to those of liberalism. If the socialism he is talking about is democratic socialism, then this was definitely a voice in 1989, but when he claims it was anti-liberal, he is quite wrong. My call to 'insist on the Four Cardinal Principles' was more 'socialist' than the examples Wang Hui gives in his essay, yet it was emphatically not anti-liberal.

This was the first time I became directly involved in current affairs. That doesn't mean I had no sense of contemporary realities in my research. But up to 1989 my main frustration was the crisis in our field, while after 1989 my concerns became focused on questions like: where should Chinese peasants go? Where should a peasant China go? Thus in the early 1990s, when most intellectuals were turning away from the grand discourses of the 'culture fever' to empirical studies, I moved from empirical studies to a greater interest in theoretical 'isms'. In 1994, I transferred to a Beijing research institute and the next year started teaching in Qinghua University. In the late 1990s, 'isms' came back into fashion again, and I once more felt ready to return to empirical studies. In my view, a weakness of the current intellectual scene in China is the separation of debate over 'isms' from examination of 'questions' in social reality. The merit of general 'isms' lies in the universal values that inform them; yet the specific theory of a given 'ism' is usually constructed in response to particular historical questions, not universal ones. Therefore, when we advocate universal values we should be careful not to confuse them with universal questions. My slogan is: 'isms' can be imported; 'questions' must be generated locally; and theories should always be constructed independently.

What were the broader perspectives in your field that you were developing in the 1990s?

During the 1980s I had already become convinced that what was happening in China should be seen within a much longer-term process of human development. This was the period, of course, when the people's communes were dissolved and the household-responsibility system, which handed economic initiative back to individual farmers, was introduced. That was the key change in the first phase of the Reform Era under Deng Xiaoping. I interpreted it as the latest episode in the millennial struggle of human society to 'cast away the bonds of community in search of individual freedom'. The first stage of this process, I thought, was to advance from the primitive tribal community to the classical society of freemen (I did not believe a 'slave society' was an appropriate definition for Antiquity); the second was to advance from the feudal patriarchal community to a pre-modern citizen society; and the third was now to advance from our Soviet-style 'iron rice bowl' community towards a democratic socialism that I believed to be the goal of reform at the time.

After 1989, many people thought that the military crack-down would interrupt the reform process, including economic reforms, and bring a reversion to the old 'iron rice bowl' system. My wife and I believed the opposite. In our view, now that the gunshots of June 4th had torn away the gentle veil of the 'grand patriarchal family', the process of 'dividing up family possessions' would probably speed up. Though the prospects of a democratic division had become slim, the 'paramount patriarch', after the show-down with the 'juniors', would have little interest in patching the previous 'grand clan' together again. More probable was a development resembling Stolypin's suppression of the 1905 revolution, which accelerated the dissolution of the Russian *mir*. We already sensed that a Stolypin-style combination of political control and economic 'freedom' was brewing. With Deng's southern tour of 1992, it duly arrived.

Theoretically, our interest in the community and its dissolution came mainly from Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Marx, in his mature work, uses the terms in a sociological sense close to that of Tönnies to designate a social ensemble bound by status, found in ancient or underdeveloped societies. There are differences. Marx not only offers a materialist and voluntarist explanation of this process, but defines community in a far broader way. In the *Grundrisse* he famously declares that 'the more deeply we go back into history, the more does the individual appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole'. In his view the evolution of these 'wholes' passed through successive forms, from the single family to the tribe and then, through 'conflict and fusion', into the total unity, squatting above all smaller communities, that was the 'Asian state'. In all these formations, personal character is suppressed; individuals are merely parts attached to the whole, as property of the community; and from individual dependence on the community, there derives the attachment of all its members to the patriarchal figure at their head.

It is not until the development of a 'civil society' that the individual can break the bonds of the community, by 'the force of exchange', and achieve human independence—and then subsequently overcome the 'alienation' of private property, and advance to an ideal state in which individuals are both free and united. Though there were some minor changes in his later work, Marx's basic view of the evolution of members of the community into independent individuals remained the same.

Up to the rise of Stolypin, Russian Social Democrats differentiated themselves from Populists by holding to this same position. Plekhanov spoke of the 'exploiting commune and exploited individual'—a tradition that shared a common intellectual ground with Tönnies. Forms of social community and their changes over time differed widely in China and the West. From Classical Antiquity to Medieval and Early Modern times, European society was largely based on small communities, whereas China developed the overriding super-community from the Qin (221–207 BC) onwards. Thus, whereas in Europe modernization meant a union of the individual citizen and an overarching community, the monarchical state, against the power of the feudal lord, in China we may have to consider the possibility of the individual citizen and the small community of villages joining forces against the everlasting supreme power of the huge central state, if the goal of modernization—to make the individual citizen both the foundation and the end of society—is to be realized.

What political conclusions do you draw from this macro-historical prospect?

Whatever the route to the final break-up of the community, its dissolution always poses three questions. First, to cast off the bonds of the community, and to lose its protection, are two sides of the same process. The individual is 'freed' of them, in both senses. Nonetheless, the two aspects have a different significance for the various social classes, whose members typically stand to make distinct, indeed conflicting, gains or losses from them. Each social class will inevitably fight for a 'division of the family assets' that best suits its own interests. This means, secondly, that the question of *how* to divide up the family assets is more important than whether or not they should be divided. The traditional Marxist stress on reactionary and revolutionary classes notwithstanding, in practice no one is ever inherently in favour of either division or preservation of the community. In Ancient Greece and Rome, both aristocrats and commoners betrayed tribal traditions. In early modern France, both royalists and Jacobins destroyed the rural commune. In today's China, the 'big wok community' is being broken up under a double pressure—from the 'uncaring father' and 'un-filial sons'.

Thirdly, disputes over 'how to divide' do not distinguish contestants as 'radical' or 'conservative', but do involve issues of justice and injustice, with considerable consequences for subsequent historical development.

When human society evolves beyond the forms of a tribal community, it makes a difference whether it takes an Athenian or a Macedonian path. In Athens, a lineage polity, dominated by elders, was transformed into a democratic polity, or classical civil society, through a commoners' revolution that included the cancellation of debts and equal distribution of land by Solon to create commoners' private property. A comparable process took place in Rome with the *Leges Liciniae Sextiae*. In Macedonia, the tribal structure evolved into a strong-man polity, replacing lineage by imperial power—including the formation of vast private domains, in the manner of Ptolemy—to establish a despotic royal rule over every subject. Likewise, there are two routes out of a feudal community. One is for 'juniors' to break away from patriarchal control and divide existing assets democratically between them; the other is for the patriarch himself, maybe with some supporting big brothers, to use his iron fist to monopolize the family assets, and drive away or enslave the juniors. Lenin called these two the American and the Prussian roads to capitalism, in the Russian debates over Stolypin's land reforms.

Prior to these reforms, the Tsar was revered by peasants as the 'father of the *mir*', which Russian liberals and social democrats alike wanted to abolish to free both peasants and land. That effectively meant privatization of land, along democratic lines. That's why Lenin later remarked that the original agrarian programme of his party had 'been carried out by Stolypin'. The injustice of Stolypin's reforms did not lie in the privatization of land, but in the oppressive expropriation of peasants to do so. At that time the Populists complained bitterly that the dissolution of the *mir* was destroying 'traditional Russian socialism', in much the way some 'leftists' in today's China protest that Deng Xiaoping has destroyed Mao's socialism. On the other hand, some Russian liberals became supporters of the oligarchy in the Stolypin period, believing that regardless of the methods by which it was realized, privatization was a boon and people should reflect on the excessive radicalism of 1905, and change their 'signposts' to cooperate with the authorities. Nowadays, this kind of liberal is quite common in China.

What is your attitude to these positions?

I have criticized both. I am against the praise of traditional socialism by our 'Populists', and also against the support by our 'oligarchic liberals' of power-elite or police-state privatization along Stolypin lines. In the

same spirit as dissident liberals (like Miliukov) and Social Democrats (like Plekhanov and the early Lenin) in Tsarist Russia, I believe that the issue we confront today is not whether to choose between capitalism or 'socialism', *mir* style or Mao style, as if we have sinned in abandoning the latter; nor between 'feudalism' or capitalism, as if all will be well as long as we reject the former. The real question facing us is which of the two possible paths, Prussian or American, rural China should take: the expropriation of the peasantry from above, by big landlords or companies, as in nineteenth-century Prussia, or the emergence of independent small-to-medium modern farmers from below, as in the nineteenth-century US. Lenin always attacked the first, and defended the second.

In Stolypin's time, Russia was not yet an industrial society and his programme was mainly a privatization of land. That is no longer the case in today's China. In my view, there are two popular myths about land privatization today. One says that it will unleash annexation, social crisis and peasant war; the other, that it will automatically optimize distribution of agrarian resources through the market. The first is historically inaccurate. The origins of peasant revolt in China, as I've said, have less to do with tenancy-rental conflicts than with expropriations by the authoritarian state. On the other hand, I do not believe that, under current conditions, the privatization of land is the best way of increasing agricultural efficiency or solving peasant problems. On the whole, I remain convinced by Plekhanov's position that socialists will not prefer privatization of land, yet must oppose 'the expropriation of land by a police state that would wipe out all the achievements of modernization and revive an Asiatic autocracy'. So in today's China, what needs to be stopped is not the distribution of land to peasants as private property, but the abuse of existing peasant rights to land by political authorities. In particular, where no issues of specific location or national planning arise, I support giving more rights to peasants and limiting government power. This position is not based on economic considerations—since, as I have explained, I do not think a free market in land would produce 'efficient big farms'—but on the belief that, as a disadvantaged social group vulnerable to abuse, peasants should enjoy greater rights to land as a line of defence against the state. If officials can take away peasants' land at will, what other civic rights would be left to them?

Currently, many peasants living near big cities or along the south-east coast have become landlords, leasing land to labourers from provinces

in the interior. Elsewhere peasants are abandoning the land altogether, leaving it uncultivated, to escape the fiscal burdens on them. But the great danger facing the population of the countryside is not a merger of peasant holdings, but state expropriation of peasant lands for commercial development. This is now a widespread phenomenon in China. In Jiangxi, for example, the local government recently forced peasants off some 8,000 acres, capable of supporting 20,000 people, to lease the land to a company supposedly engaged in ecologically enlightened agriculture. In practice, all the compensation the peasants received was to be excused from paying taxes—they got nothing from the deal, and when they protested, the government sent the police to quell them. Had the land been the private property of the peasants, the company would have found it very difficult to annex an area as large as this by market exchange. The scale of this abuse stirred up strong reactions, but it is not an isolated instance. Thus, many people now hold the view that the only way to protect peasants is to hand land over to them and deprive the authorities of the power to make land deals behind their backs. So my support for a conditional privatization of land in China is more political than economic. In point of fact, the notion that Stolypin's reforms assured the development of a rich peasant economy in Russia is itself an exaggeration.

Stolypin's 'wager on the strong' failed in large part because he underestimated the moral cohesion of Russian village communities, which resisted individual families 'separating off' from collective-ownership practices on the land, and kept a sharp eye out for opportunist conduct by better-off peasants. The Bolsheviks, who had no roots in the countryside, of which they had very poor understanding, then made the same mistake from the opposite direction. They tried to unleash class war in the Russian villages, by mobilizing 'poor peasants' against 'kulaks'. But the village communities did not like that either: they had a very strong egalitarian but also autonomous tradition, which bound all peasants together in a common moral economy. Soviet collectivization proved a disaster. In China, on the other hand, the party was strongly rooted in the countryside, enjoying widespread respect from the peasants after Liberation, while the villages lacked the sort of collective, autonomous organization that marked the Russian mir—they were much more like Sun Yat-sen's 'tray of sand'. Doesn't that account for the relative smoothness with which the CCP could initially carry out collectivization in the 1950s, by comparison with the cataclysm provoked by the CPSU?

I more or less agree with this description of Russian and Chinese collectivization, though in China I believe the lack of autonomous village institutions was much more important than the Party's base in the countryside. A further significant difference was that the Russian land reforms involved a total reversal of Stolypin's measures, eliminating independent peasants and communalizing the villages. By contrast, the Chinese reform eliminated not only landlords but also what local institutions there were, which had never been very strong. However, just because Chinese peasants lacked common bonds, they were quite incapable of collective resistance to the will of the state, of the sort the tradition of the *mir* offered in Russia. It is much easier for a strong authoritarian state to control an atomized countryside than a communalized one.

For this reason, when I talk about privatization today, I never separate it from democratization. The one without the other will lead to much suffering and disaster. In our current conditions, 'no taxation without representation' would be a very powerful—though still only hopeful—slogan for Chinese peasants. In Europe, people assume that if a government does not protect its farmers, it is not doing its job. There the Right advocates *laissez-faire* and the Left a welfare state. But in the situation of Chinese peasants, these are false alternatives. The majority of the Chinese population—that is, the peasantry who make up around 65 per cent, some 800 million people—lacks both freedom and security. They need at one and the same time more *laissez-faire* and more welfare support.

What sort of services are accessible to them today?

The crisis of welfare services in the countryside is acute. The most publicly visible collapse—now discussed even in the official media—is in rural education. Under the 'Law of Compulsory Education', the government is supposed to provide free education for all its citizens. But in China, this law is now often interpreted just as the duty of peasants to send their children to school. Rural authorities often arrest peasants who do not want to send their children to school, accusing them of violating the law—ignoring the fact that they cannot afford to pay the fees.

In the Mao years, education was strictly controlled as the 'ideological frontier' of the state. The masses were required to imbibe a distillation of official doctrines. Investment in education was even lower than it is today: rural schools mostly had 'locally sponsored' and 'substitute' teachers, in

effect paid by the peasants themselves. But since the peasant household was not an independent economic entity at the time, and locally sponsored teachers received their wages directly from the production unit, peasant families did not feel educational expenses as an immediate pressure on themselves. This was in line with the general situation in which the state extracted its original accumulation directly from the 'collective economy', rather than by fiscal mechanisms. The Maoist regime did not tax peasant households and so there was no question of 'peasant liability' for fiscal burdens, as there is today. There is no cause to regret the passing of that system—millions of peasants starved to death—and those who now point to the absence of school fees in that period are at any rate one-sided. It is not that reforms of the past two decades have destroyed China's compulsory schooling system. On the contrary, the Chinese state has never fulfilled its duty to provide education for peasants.

Still, it is true that educational problems in the countryside are different today. Under Mao peasant children were never prevented from attending school because they were unable to pay school fees; but cases where children had no school to attend due to insufficient equipment indeed existed. School conditions were very bad, and for a long time they taught nothing but Mao's little red book. The system of locally sponsored teachers created opportunities for corruption by local cadres, who had the power to make the appointments. Things improved at the beginning of the Reform era. The amount of political propaganda in schools was reduced and the quality of rural education got better; another big improvement was a change that allowed locally sponsored teachers to transfer to state sponsorship, by selection through unified examinations.

However, the situation has deteriorated significantly in the 1990s. On the one hand, school fees shot up in this period, while on the other a new fiscal system has dictated that 'revenues go up and expenditures move down', effectively encouraging villages to collect money from peasants. This practice has not only erased entirely the positive reforms of the early 1980s, but has actually turned 'state-sponsored' teachers into locally sponsored—i.e., peasant-supported—teachers as well. Thus we come back to the same question: the crisis in rural education is caused by a state that has too much power and accepts too few responsibilities. The situation is so bad that private charities now exist everywhere, trying to raise money for village children's education. These, however, are actually controlled, though not funded, by the government. The authorities

give no administrative support; nor are there any regulations governing the proportion of donations that may be spent on running costs as opposed to charitable distribution. Naturally, in conditions lacking any transparency or supervision, this leads to embezzlement and corruption. The more closely the charity is linked to the government, the better any irregularity is covered up. The same is true of poverty assistance where, for many years, funds were diverted from poor peasants into the pockets of local authorities.

How have peasants reacted to the changes in the countryside since Mao?

In terms of their own rights, peasants need to see both justice and the benefits of reform; in terms of historical development, they need to transform themselves from 'peasants' to 'farmers'. This is not a question of public versus private ownership, or 'privatization into big' versus 'privatization into small'. More accurately, it is a process from non-freedom to freedom—in Marx's words, from the 'dependence' to the 'independence of Man'. Under the Maoist system Chinese peasants were tightly controlled, and received little protection. Then at the beginning of the Reform Era the people's communes were dissolved and their main patrimony, land, was redistributed among the peasants relatively fairly, under the 'household responsibility' system. So at first peasants were in favour of reform and displayed rather strong 'civic' consciousness. By contrast, the old order afforded more protection to the urban population, so the cost of breaking its bonds was higher. Moreover, the way industry was divided—the ostensible caretaker bearing away all the valuables of a virtually bankrupt household, while kicking out its members who had had an 'iron bowl' there—was highly unjust. So city dwellers, especially workers of state-owned enterprises, were more resistant to reform and more attached to the previous status system.

But these relationships have altered as the reform process has developed. In recent years, the continual shift of the transitional costs of reform to the countryside has significantly worsened the situation of the peasantry. When China joins the WTO, its condition will become even more critical. On one hand, WTO entry will be a big blow to Chinese agriculture, as cheap imports come into the country, lowering peasant incomes. That will be a major challenge to the rural population. On the other, the extension of an 'international standard' of civil rights through the WTO will open the door for peasants to move to the cities, gradually cancelling

status barriers and yielding them market freedoms, and so once more liberating their potential for development. That will be an opportunity for the rural population. If liberalization both of trade and of residential controls are handled well, the WTO will bring more benefit than harm to Chinese peasants and so to China. The key issue here will be who is treated as a 'citizen'—that is, able to enjoy equal rights before the law and to participate in equal competition. If 'citizen treatment' is granted only to foreign investors, but not to our own peasants, their situation will deteriorate yet further, and they will resist reform. If 'peasants' are to become 'farmers', they need to move—in Henry Maine's terminology—from status to contract, acquiring the freedoms of a modern citizen. If they are denied these, and see no justice or benefit in the reforms now impending, they will be 'forced into reaction', as Russian peasants were in the Stolypin era. In that case, China's future could be doomed.

In Iran, the Shah's 'White Revolution' was an oligarchic capitalist programme of authoritarian modernization that provoked a strong fundamentalist reaction, eventually unleashing Khomeini's 'Black Revolution'. That looks quite similar to the way Stolypin's reforms met with a powerful reaction from the tradition of the *mir*, paving the way for the October Revolution. Yet Russian peasants hated Stolypin's reforms because they deprived them of land, whereas the attitude of Iranian peasants was just the opposite. When the Islamic Revolution swept Iran's main cities in 1977–79, Iranian peasants—about half the population—remained either indifferent or hostile to the uprising against the Shah. They had benefited from his agrarian reform, which had also distributed mosque lands to them, and felt they should be loyal to him—sometimes attacking revolutionary rallies and raiding the houses of landlords and Islamic activists. For the same reasons, Iranian landlords often backed the revolution against the Shah, whereas Russian landlords became the first target of the revolution of 1917. I mention all this to show that no class is inherently 'progressive' in history. We should not be asking ourselves which class can mobilize all others for reform, but what kind of reform would be fair, and benefit the majority of the population, which in China is obviously the peasantry.

What has been the initial impact of China's entry into the WTO?

China's WTO deal includes a ceiling of 8.5 per cent on agricultural subsidies, which is extremely low in the eyes of European and American

negotiators. But what foreigners do not understand is that Chinese peasants have always received zero, if not negative, subsidies from the State. In practice, then, this is a clause that subsidizes exporters of agricultural produce, and has little to do with peasants. For example in 2002, the first year of China's WTO membership, China's agricultural trade balance saw a fall in imports and a sharp rise in exports—all under low subsidies and tariffs as agreed, despite US accusations of cheating. As a matter of fact, China's domestic grain market had been stagnant for years, but when grain prices rose in Canada and the US due to natural disasters last year, Chinese exporters seized the opportunity. The subsidies they received from the Chinese state did not exceed WTO dictates, but were enough for them to buy grain from peasants at unprecedentedly low prices and then sell it at a handsome profit on the international market. The official media extolled this achievement as 'transforming a challenge into an opportunity', when in effect it was based on transferring real costs onto the shoulders of the peasantry, in just another example of heavy 'taxation without representation'. Is a practice like this a surrender to America? A surrender to 'globalization'? A surrender to the WTO? Or is it a surrender to the long tradition—from the first Qin Emperor to Mao Zedong—that does not treat a peasant as an individual citizen?

Obviously, in the manufacturing sector no labour force—either under the welfare system of developed countries, or backed by trade unions in Third World or East European democracies—can 'compete' with a Chinese working class that has no right to unions or to labour negotiations. So too, Western farmers who rely on state subsidies may find it difficult to compete with Chinese exporters who can rely on peasant producers who have never enjoyed any protection, only strict control—causes underlying many of the 'miracles' in today's China that often seem equally baffling to Right and Left in the West. In fact, though no one in the contemporary world will say so, such a situation is not without historical precedent. Around the sixteenth century, some East European countries became highly competitive in commercial agriculture by establishing a 'second serfdom'. You can find people in today's Chinese think-tanks who understand this very well. In some internal discussions they bluntly state that, as China has no comparative advantages in either resources or technology in today's world, and cannot advance either to a real socialism or a real capitalism, its competitive edge can only come from its unique system of dependent labour.

Factually, I admit they are to a great extent right. Without this labour system China wouldn't have been able to pull off the 'miracle of competitiveness', which attracts such interest from the West, the former Soviet bloc and many Third World democracies—but which they will never be able to emulate. The question I would ask, however, is whether a 'miracle' of this kind is sustainable? We might want to look at the long-term consequences of the 'second serfdom' in Eastern Europe. Nowadays there is a lot of talk in the US about a 'China threat'. Actually, as no big power emerged out of the sixteenth-century East European experience, it is highly doubtful whether the current Chinese miracle could continue to a point where it really did threaten the West. But even if economic magic of this sort, that does not treat people as human beings, did take China to the top of the world, what would be its value? Such a development would first of all threaten the existence of the Chinese people themselves.

Your focus on agrarian problems has sometimes won you the label of a Chinese Populist. Do you accept it?

No, if the connotation of the term is understood as essentially Russian, I do not. I could be considered similar to the American Populists. I am an opponent of Russian-style Populism, particularly the version represented by figures like Petr Tkachev. That does not mean my opposition is principally to do with Narodnik terrorism. Many Narodniks were not involved in assassinations, and those who were involved were not always Narodniks. My position is that I am for the common people—which is why I share some of the outlook of the American Populists—but against any kind of collectivism that denies personal freedom and suppresses individual rights. Sometimes such collectivism looks popular in character, while in reality it is only a step away from oligarchy. Populism of the sort that allows a consensus of five persons to deprive the sixth of their right to expression easily becomes an oligarchy of those who then claim to represent everyone. Witte once said that in Russia, the Black Hundreds had something in common with the Narodniks: it was just that the latter stood for an innocent, idealist collectivism, and the former for a gangster collectivism. Akhmed Iskenderov too has commented that in the 1890s, far left and far right in Russia formed an odd unity over the issue of the *mir* versus the individual. In my view, the opposite is also true: in late Tsarist Russia, Social Democrats and Liberals were (not that oddly) united in favour of casting off communal bonds on individual freedom. That was a unity which was both anti-populist and anti-oligarchic.

Originally, the Narodniks were famous for their programme of 'advancing from the *mir* to the commune to socialism'—strengthening the existing village communities and opposing the 'individualism' of the independent peasant household. At that time, Social Democrats criticized this as a form of 'popular dictatorship' and 'state socialism', which protected the 'exploitative *mir*' and obstructed peasant freedom. But over time, moderate Narodniks grew more tolerant towards independent peasants, whereas the Social Democratic current led by Lenin, in fighting against Stolypin's reforms, changed direction, putting more and more emphasis on land nationalization as if they were extreme Narodniks. Thus what Plekhanov had once condemned as the Narodnik vista of a populist dictatorship was eventually transformed into reality by his students, Lenin and others, who betrayed him. Plekhanov was a Westernized theorist, very familiar with modern civilization in Europe, and its traditions of socialism and liberalism. But he was not very well informed about Russian society or traditions, about which he knew far less not only than Narodnik sociologists but than Lenin.

Yet the irony of history—not just Russian history—is that while Plekhanov, who understood modernization but not Russia, could not realize his programme, those who understood Russia but not modernization did realize theirs; yet their success led only to a metamorphosis of the traditional evils of Russia, and to the failure of social democratization. We are facing similar problems in China today. The lesson of the Russian experience, in my view, is that a consistent fight against Stolypin-style policies can only be based on the positions that were originally taken by Liberals and Social Democrats: that is, backing the American against the Prussian road to agrarian capitalism, rather than clinging to any kind of traditional 'socialism'.

How then would you describe the range of prescriptions advocated for China's future in contemporary debates?

Let me put it this way. From the 1950s to the 1970s, China could be presented as a great patriarchal family; the state controlled everything, under the rule of the Party. In the 1980s, the 'family' could no longer be held together and a division of its patrimony became inevitable. Today, everyone agrees that the 'family' must be split up, but there is hot disagreement about how it should be divided. This is the issue that now defines the different camps in China. Firstly, there are those who

want to revive collective traditions to resist the spread of Western-style individualism. They look to what they consider China's socialist legacy as the antidote to the disease of liberalism. This is what I call Chinese Populism. Its intellectual strongholds are mostly in the humanities. A second camp are the Stolypin-style oligarchs. Their outlook is very simple: state assets are booty to be plundered, according to the principle, 'to each according to his power'. Intellectually, they are most strongly represented among economists. People usually term the first group—populists, by my definition—the Chinese New Left, and the second group—oligarchs, according to my conception—Liberals.

I have been critical of both positions, from a standpoint that is probably strongest in the social sciences, and might seem disconcerting in a Western intellectual context. For my objections to the so-called New Left in China are mainly based on social-democratic theory, and my objections to the oligarchic programme, or economic libertarianism, are mainly based on liberal theory. Moreover, the social-democratic traditions on which I draw are not those of the contemporary Western parties, which seem to be turning to the right, but rather the classical legacy of the First and Second Internationals, from Marx and Engels to Bernstein and Plekhanov. Similarly, the liberal sources to which I look are not those of the contemporary liberal left, such as the redistributive traditions of Roosevelt or Rawls, but the classical liberalism of Robert Nozick. When I criticize the oligarchic camp, I stand by Nozick's argument that privatization must respect 'integral justice of possession'—that is, principles of just acquisition, just exchange and just reparation. That means shunning the Stolypin path of robbery in privatizing public assets. That I ignore the tradition of Roosevelt here does not mean I am against it. But how can we talk about a welfare state in China, when we can't even stop wholesale theft of public property?

In the West, there are contradictions between these two inheritances—classical social-democracy and classical liberalism—over issues like welfare and regulation of the economy. But these have little bearing in China today. Its situation is much more like that confronting Marx, who preferred the free-market Physiocrats of eighteenth-century France to the state-oriented Mercantilists, and Adam Smith to the German Historical School; or for that matter Plekhanov, who feared the consequences of Stolypin's programme. In fact, when facing a police state, the Left always defended *laissez-faire* more strongly than the Right.

Historically, the tradition of the Left in the West was socialist, not statist—for a long time statism was regarded as an appendage of the Right. The welfare state defended by the Left today places more responsibilities on the state, but is no Leviathan expanding its own power indefinitely, of the sort liberals have always feared. For their part, liberals have shown time and again how an oversized state may threaten citizens' freedom, but have never argued that the state should have no public responsibilities. So we need to ask: under what conditions do these two traditions enter into contradiction? The answer is that they can do so when the powers and obligations of a state are based on a social contract in which citizens delegate powers to the state and expect in exchange fulfilment of certain duties by it. How much responsibility citizens wish the state to take will then determine how much power they delegate to it. It is in this situation that social democrats demanding that the state assume more responsibilities will come into conflict with liberals demanding that the state's powers be limited.

In China, however, where the legitimacy of the state is not based on the principle of social contract, state powers in no way correspond to state responsibilities. Here, on the contrary, the state enjoys enormous powers and accepts few responsibilities. In this situation, the social-democratic demand that the state's responsibilities be increased is in harmony with the liberal demand that the state's powers be limited and reduced. For that would bring the two into greater balance. In China today, we need to restrict the powers of the state, and enlarge its responsibilities. Only democracy will allow us to achieve this two-fold change.

How widespread is such a view?

These are positions that should have drawn support from social democrats and liberals alike, but that is not yet the reality in China today. I have friends in both the camps I criticize—the 'Chinese New Left' and the 'Liberals'. However, though to some extent both these positions are tolerated by the authorities, mine is not. This is a period when the spectres of Stalin and Pol Pot are still on the loose, even while Suharto and Pinochet are riding the tide of the time. The first can still rob people's private property for the coffers of the state, while the second can rob the coffers of the state for the private fortunes of power-holders. In practice, they share a tacit bottom line: the first can still punish 'Havels' as before, and the second have no difficulty dispatching more 'Allendes'.

In these conditions why should the Havels of true liberalism and the Allendes of true social-democracy argue with each other?

Looking to the future, do you regard an evolution along Taiwanese lines as a possible scenario in China—the CCP following the path of the KMT, and gradually relaxing its grip, to allow a peaceful transition to a multi-party democracy?

I very much hope so, but it will be much more difficult for the Mainland to make the same kind of transition. Some would say this is because the CCP is even more authoritarian than the KMT used to be, but that's not the fundamental problem; any party can change over time—look at the Communist Parties of Eastern Europe. The real difficulty is that the PRC could find it hard to pull back from the Stolypin road down which it is now driving. Moreover, in Taiwan, Indonesia or South Africa, political democratization occurred within an economic system that remained unchanged. Democratization there was mainly a question of political reconciliation: Mandela and De Klerk shaking hands. In Eastern Europe, by contrast, privatization and democratization took place more or less at the same time. When democratization occurred, publicly owned assets were still relatively intact, so that their division was accomplished through a bargaining process, which—though people grumbled about it—was perceived as relatively legitimate. No one, on the left or right, now seeks to overturn the results, even if people on the left might criticize its lack of 'substantive' justice.

But in China, privatization is occurring *before* democratization. If all our public assets are to be confiscated by oligarchs, the result will be blatantly piratical and unjust. No doubt if democracy is postponed for another two hundred years, people will have forgotten the brazen injustice being perpetrated today, and accept the results. But if democratization comes soon there will be no Mandela-style 'political reconciliation', but great popular anger and determination to reverse the injustice. Then the outcome could be like Russia all over again—the new Stolypins in China producing a new Bolshevik revolution, leading to a new despotism once again.

But wouldn't any capable CCP functionary say to you: just so—that is why we need to hold power for another half-century, at least, and then you can have democracy without any commotion?

Another fifty years—could the current rate of growth be sustained that long? It's easier to build democracy in good times, under conditions of prosperity. But there is a paradox here, for it is in just such times that pressure for democracy tends to be least. It would have been much easier to create democracy in Russia in 1913 (or still more 1905) than it was in 1917. But in bad times, the people will cry out—why do we have to accept injustice?—as they did in 1917. On the other hand, such indignation is historically rare. In Indonesia, while people called for the trial of Suharto as an individual, they didn't question the property regime as a whole. But Indonesia was not a transitional society, unlike China where the outcome might be much more chaotic. Still, looking at the comparative historical record, I acknowledge that it is probably a fact of human nature that most people don't have a strong sense of justice.

You say that in Eastern Europe the results of privatization have been accepted. Would you claim the same of Russia, where oligarchic corruption was such that even advocates of privatization have had to excuse today's pillage as the regrettable price of tomorrow's bright future? China's population is ten times larger than that of either Eastern Europe or Russia. Isn't it utopian to imagine a fair privatization among this huge population?

It is true that democratization in Russia was much less advanced than in the Czech Republic or Poland, and so its privatizations were far less equitable. Yeltsin's government betrayed its promise to divide and redistribute state assets, putting them directly into the pockets of a new oligarchy. Even Czech-style 'fair redistribution' has in practice had its drawbacks. But in any case my argument is only that democratization is a necessary condition for a relatively acceptable process of privatization, not that it is a sufficient condition. In a democratic society, privatizations may not be entirely just, but in an undemocratic society they will certainly be unjust. That is the distinction I want to make.

When they consider China, Western economists tend to fall into schools. One is the 'Washington Consensus' of classical liberals, who believe that by avoiding the issue of privatization China is making only temporary gains and will face grave consequences in the future—whereas East European countries that have implemented radical privatization are experiencing temporary pains, but assuring long-term prosperity for themselves. The other is more or less Keynesian: it thinks China is a 'state-controlled' or 'quasi-welfare economy' and praises it for not

rushing into excessive marketization. Both are under the illusion that the Chinese transition is more 'gradual' and 'socialist' than the East European. In reality, the process of 'dividing up the big family's assets' has been proceeding as relentlessly in China as in Eastern Europe. What Eastern Europe couldn't match is our Stolypin style of redistribution—Russia is closer to that. What I firmly believe in is an equal, just and open process of privatization, based on democratic participation and public supervision; it would plainly be practical to sell state-owned assets fairly and use the receipts to fund social security and public welfare. On the other hand, if privatization is an operation done in the dark, under authoritarian rule, whether by 'division' or 'sale' it will inevitably be robbery of the masses.

Some Chinese intellectuals have launched the slogan, 'Farewell to utopia'. I do not agree with it. The 'utopian disasters' of twentieth-century China were caused by coercive experiments, not utopia itself. For utopia, if we mean by the term 'an ideal that cannot be realized', is first of all not something to which one can simply say 'farewell', since human beings cannot always judge what is feasible and what is not. So there is no way they can just proceed to think within the realm of 'realizable' ideas. In this sense, after a 'farewell' to utopia there will be no more independent free thinkers. Hayek rightly points to the limits of rational thought, urging us to beware of the 'conceit of reason'. But he evades the paradox that, precisely because our reason is limited, we cannot know where its limits may lie. Therefore it is both unnecessary and impossible to 'limit reason', whereas to limit coercion is essential and possible. In other words, no humanistic idea—be it practical or utopian—should be implemented at a destructive cost to either private liberty or public democracy. We must uphold ideals, and resist violence. To imagine a fair privatization in conditions of democracy among our vast population may be utopian, but without such dreams we will open the door for an undemocratic one to proceed unchecked.

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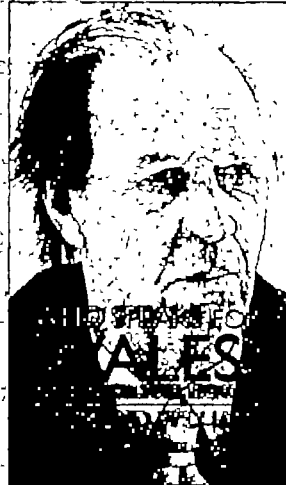
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MICHAEL MAAR

TEDDY AND TOMMY

The Masks of Doctor Faustus

A FEW YEARS AGO, a Scottish newspaper carried the story of a bird-call imitator who, to his great pride, had sustained a conversation with an owl in the next door garden for over a decade. They would call to each other every evening from either side of the wall. One day his wife mentioned the matter to her neighbour. This lady's husband, it appeared, had also been mimicking an owl for the past ten years. Is it conceivable that this Scottish misunderstanding might cast some light on the complex relationship between Thomas Mann and Theodor Adorno—or Tommy and Teddy, as they called themselves?

Let us begin with the end. When Adorno learned of Mann's death, he telegraphed his widow Katia:

Dear lady, they telephoned me from Frankfurt with the inconceivable news. I don't know what to say—the blow is crippling. Just this—something that perhaps may be said only at such an hour—I loved him very, very much. Our thoughts are with you. Entirely your Teddy Adorno'

It was indeed a love story, though a one-sided affair. Adorno really did love Mann. Their correspondence reveals him solicitous, faithful, flattering; unflagging in his enthusiasm, he heaped the great author with high praise to the last. In 1945, two years after their first encounter, Adorno offered Mann—at seventy one, nearly thirty years his senior—this moving confession:

When I met you, here on this far-flung western shore, I had the sense of physically encountering for the first and only time the German tradition from which I have received everything; including the strength to with-

stand that tradition. This feeling and the happiness it granted—theologians would speak of a blessing—will never leave me. Years ago, in Kampen, in the summer of 1921, I followed you, unobserved, on a long walk, wondering what it would be like if you turned round and spoke to me. That you have actually taken me for an interlocutor, twenty years later, is thus a sort of materialized Utopia, such as rarely falls within our lot.²

This was written during that magical time when the two were neighbours in California and met several times a week to work together on *Doctor Faustus*. Their intimacy was short-lived, yet Adorno nourished the notion that it endured to the end. Near the conclusion of his extraordinary essay, 'Towards a Portrait of Thomas Mann', he touches on Mann's playful nature, which survived the most extreme situations:

Nothing could subdue it; his playful spirit even sent out its feelers towards death. In the last letter I received from him, in Sils-Maria, a few days before he died, he juggled both his suffering and death itself—of whose possibility he had few illusions—with the ease of Rastelli.

Nobody who has read Adorno's essay can forget that impressive detail—he had fun even with his death! The letter itself, however, proves more puzzling, and Adorno's reading is, to put it cautiously, a very free interpretation. Mann's message to him was scarcely suffused with the consciousness, or even the suspicion, that his condition was fatal. He was worried, but had no real idea how dangerous the illness was. He explained that he would have to rest in the Zürich cantonal hospital for another four weeks, at least, to cure the inflammation of his veins. Then they would meet up in Kilchberg. Adorno would enjoy seeing his house, whose beautiful situation and unpretentious comfort made it the perfect final residence.

The only hint Adorno might have misread as a secret intimation of death lies in an interjected dash. Mann wrote:

Yes, I have been cheated out of a week of lovely weather in Noordwijk and shall now have to pass on—I don't know how many weeks of normal and upright life because of this unexpected illness, one wholly alien to me . . .³

² Theodor Adorno and Thomas Mann, *Briefwechsel, 1943–1955*, Christoph Godde and Thomas Sprecher, eds, Frankfurt 2002, p. 153; 13 August 1955. Mann never used the diminutive with Adorno, of course; but he was 'Tommy' to his brother Heinrich.

³ 3 June 1945: *Briefwechsel*, p. 17.

⁴ *Letters of Thomas Mann*, Berkeley 1990, p. 479; translation modified.

The dash '—I don't know how many', the slight hesitation expressed by this pause, indicated anxiety as to how much longer he would be confined to bed. Adorno clearly wanted to read it as a play on the phrase 'passing on'—*umkommen*, in German, meaning to die, rather than *um etwas kommen*, to be denied something; as if the sentence broke off at the dash and read, 'I shall now have to pass on'. Nothing like that was intended, as the rest of the letter proved; but Adorno preferred to understand it that way. His interpretation was not just a matter of sensitivity taken to precious extremes. His subtlety was mixed with something else. Adorno was showing off, plucking a few leaves from the laurel-wreath for himself by suggesting a close relationship to the dead man. Readers of the 'Portrait' were invited to believe Adorno was such an intimate friend that, even in his final hours, Mann slipped him secret messages and chose him as his juggling partner in his game with death.

A cool appreciation

Nothing, alas, could be further from the truth. Adorno was neither a friend nor a confidant, and had no particular emotional significance for Mann—a sad fact, but there is no other conclusion to be drawn from the letters, diaries and other testimony Mann left behind. Respect and esteem, certainly. In intellectual terms, he took the musicologist, philosopher and critic very seriously. Even though he never saw Adorno again after the latter's return to Europe in 1949, Mann faithfully read everything he was sent. For instance:

What a happy form, the long aphorism or short essay of your *Minima Moralia* . . . For days I've been magnetically drawn to your book; it is fascinating to read, though such concentrated fare must be taken in little sips. They say that the companion of Sirius, white in colour, is composed of such dense material that a cubic inch of it would weigh a ton here. It possesses, in consequence, an immensely powerful gravitational field, similar to the force surrounding your book. And such intimate, inviting titles for these breath-taking thought-experiments. Just as one says, 'quite enough for today!', there comes another fairy-tale heading and one stumbles into a fresh adventure.⁴

Two-edged praise, though honestly meant. Adorno had indeed discovered a happy literary form for *Minima Moralia*. Somewhat less fortunate, for Mann, were his political maxims, which marked a clear difference

⁴ 9 January 1952: *Briefwechsel*, p. 97.

between them; especially over attitudes to their native land. Adorno was too German-friendly for Mann's taste. In 1949, after his return to Frankfurt, Adorno sent back enthusiastic reports of his young students, with whom he discussed unfathomable questions that lay 'on the border between logic and metaphysics'. Sometimes he felt that 'the spirits of the murdered Jews had risen up in the German intellectuals'. His pride at being so much in demand was unconcealed—the students even begged him to extend his seminars into the holidays! In his reply, Mann addressed German matters only in an ironic aside, wishing Adorno 'continued joyful fantasizing with the children'. It was a long time before he would even consider reconciliation with those who had stayed behind, and who now pleaded the excuse of an inner exile, while reproaching him for not helping with the country's reconstruction. Adorno sounded somewhat sobered in his next letter of June 1950:

I should very much like to speak to you in person about the progress of my German experience. Not without [Adorno's wife] Gretel's doing, a moment of negativity has become increasingly conjoined.⁵

'Become increasingly conjoined': Mann would have raised an eyebrow at that. Adorno often expressed himself in formulations of this sort, which went with his unwillingness to answer certain questions clearly. Take the great 1952 essay on Wagner, of which Mann always spoke with the highest respect. Nevertheless, he could not refrain from adding a qualifying remark to the author—a needle-prick to let some hot air escape from the great balloon of theory. Citing Adorno's phrase—'If, however, the decaying society [reflected in Wagner's work] develops within itself the possibilities of another, which might perhaps step into its place'—Mann commented:

Were there only a single positive word from you, my dear sir, vouchsafing even an approximate vision of the to-be-postulated society! 'Reflections from a Damaged Life' falls short only in that. What is, what would be, the just society? At one point you quote Lukács approvingly; and in general suggest a kind of refined communism. But what does *that* look like? Russian despotism is wrong. But is communism even thinkable without despotism? 'It isn't this and it isn't that. But what will it be in the end?'⁶

Adorno replied that only a rogue would offer more than he had in his pocket; and that Hegel, and those who set Hegel on his feet,

⁵ 3 June 1950: *Briefwechsel*, p. 61.

⁶ 30 October 1952: *Briefwechsel*, p. 122.

had inoculated him with an ascetic resistance against the unmediated declaration of the positive. Mann's question about a better form of society remained unanswered—with customary brilliance.

When it came to matters of art rather than utopian politics, however, Adorno could be both brilliant and explicit. He wrote a major epistolary comment in response to each of Mann's new works, every one of which put most previous attempts at exegesis in the shade. Did the object of such powerful, loving evaluations acknowledge the true weight of these chains? One example here is highly suggestive. The long letter Adorno sent Mann about 'The Black Swan', his last story, was dated 18 January 1954. Mann wrote not a syllable about this in his diary—unless, that is, the post from Frankfurt to Zürich took four days; in which case Adorno would have been implicated in Mann's entry for January 23rd, which concluded briefly: 'superfluous mail'.

Failed rendezvous

Adorno's letters were never superfluous, though they were not without their oddities. After all his praise for the principal character of 'The Black Swan' and her daughter, the abstract painter, an amusing thought occurred which he immediately wanted to share: 'I cannot refrain from imparting to you a tiny detail of which you might not yet be aware. Rosalie's proposal to her daughter—to paint "scent" as such—had already been realized for some time before you broke the news to us.' The surrealist Masson, Adorno explained, had been working along just these lines: all figurative objects had vanished from his recent paintings. Adorno had encountered them in Paris the year before:

So when you come to Paris—and I can't imagine that the work on *Krull* can tolerate too long an absence from his adopted homeland—you mustn't neglect to pay a visit to the Galerie Leiris, and let my charming friend Kahnweiler show you those Massons.⁷

Mann run after some curator, looking for Massons? The devil he would—as if he didn't have other worries. Adorno was always trying to lure him to Paris. In September 1952 he wrote again to Mann—they had not seen each other for three years—about their overlapping travel plans.

⁷ 18 January 1954: *Briefwechsel*, p. 135.

The thought that we might miss each other once more is positively unbearable to me—forgive me this raw confession. On the other hand, as you can imagine, I'm so tied up with institutional matters those last weeks in Frankfurt that I can't get away for a day. I write in the desperate hope that your journey takes you to Paris between the 15th and 21st of October, or that it might be guided there—if you don't see any impertinence in that.⁸

There is something tragi-comic about the proposal. Adorno believes, in all seriousness, that Mann might consider travelling to Paris for no other reason than to meet him. Mann would never have dreamt of it. He had not even mentioned to Adorno that he would be visiting Munich in August 1952; had Mann informed him, Adorno would doubtless have thrown himself into the next train south. Such an omission, evidence at best of thoughtlessness, must have seemed cruel, even if Adorno could never bring himself to complain outright. On the question of the Paris visit, Mann answered him politely: alas, October would not see him there, but perhaps Adorno could break his journey in Zürich? In his answer, Adorno could not suppress a gentle reference to how good his original idea had been:

My dear and honoured Dr. Mann, I scarcely imagined it could be otherwise—we are going to miss one another once again. You will believe me when I say that I did consider a stopover in Zürich; otherwise my attempt to lure you to Paris would have been sheer impertinence, no matter how many other factors recommend the city for such a rendezvous.⁹

Adorno always protested a touch too much: he was 'inconsolable' when a plan to meet went awry; the notion that Mann might interrupt, even for a second, his work on *Krull* for the mere purpose of writing to him was 'unbearable'. At the same time, he could not refrain from puffing his own merits; presumption peeps out from his devotion. In January 1952 he wrote Mann a paean of praise for the two new scenes from *Felix Krull* published in the *Neue Rundschau*. Mann had broken off the novel forty years before, and Adorno had continually encouraged him to take it up:

In short, I was not only delighted by what I read, but even a little flattered to imagine that the shameless, Cato-like insistence with which I have perpetually redirected our conversations to the completion of *Krull* had met with no rebuke, but rather such an enchanting reward.¹⁰

⁸ 26 September 1952: *Briefwechsel*, p. 115.

⁹ 6 October 1952: *Briefwechsel*, p. 118.

¹⁰ 2 January 1952: *Briefwechsel*, p. 93.

Adorno, complimenting himself on the fact that Krull had been resumed—as if Mann had been in need of his encouragement. There are works that owe their existence to such promptings, but Adorno's influence on the Confidence Trickster fragments was infinitely small. In any case it would have been tactless to angle for acknowledgment in this way, or to harp on the excellence of his own advice. Remarks of that sort are human, but also somewhat fatal. They suggest an inflated self-esteem, pointing to Adorno's blind spot.

For he combined stupendous intelligence with one conspicuous weakness. There are only occasional flashes of this in his exchanges with Mann. In his friendship with Walter Benjamin it is far more flagrant. Adorno had little sympathy or sensitivity for what others found interesting or dull; for the times when it is advisable to hide one's own light under a bushel; for difficult situations in which it is best to keep quiet, display some understanding, or give way. Now and then there is something autistic about him, something owlshly egocentric—in the old sense of an owl who lets no hushed mouse creep past him at night, though in the light of day is almost blind. Today we might describe this as a lack of 'emotional intelligence'; Adorno would have passed his own verdict on the term but it was, nevertheless, something of which he was in short supply.

Elysium's side entrance

This side of Adorno did not escape the creator of Krull, himself an arch-egocentric. It was, in fact, the heart of the problem—one which became distressingly visible for the first time in February 1948. Mann was a guest at a house-warming party in Los Angeles, near where Adorno lived. The evening did not pass without mishap, as Mann recalled in his diary:

A hysterical outburst from Adorno as he waited for the end of the meal—consciousness of musical participation in *Faustus* seething in his breast. Somewhat spooky.

By this time, Mann had become involved in a plan to draft *The Story of a Novel*, setting down an account of 'the genesis of *Doctor Faustus*' for no other reason than to make public Adorno's contribution and quiet this inner turmoil. Mann had to battle through these matters with his family, who found it 'unbearably disillusioning' that the musical adviser should

be given such credit. His daughter Erika and wife Katia harried him so much that he deleted certain passages from the manuscript. Sufficient still remained to satisfy the yearning to which Adorno confessed, when news of Mann's intention first reached him:

Perhaps it would not be too immodest of me to ask you to emphasize my conceptual-imaginative contribution to Leverkühn's oeuvre and aesthetic, over and above the merely factual informative material. I envisage with the greatest excitement the backdoor to immortality that your *Story of a Novel* will open for me.¹¹

Was the backdoor opened too wide? In 1951 Mann wrote to an acquaintance:

With the *Genesis* [of *Doctor Faustus*] I've turned a very powerful spotlight upon him, in whose glare he puffs himself up rather unpleasantly—to the point that it almost seems that he himself has written *Faustus*. This just between ourselves. My admiration for his extraordinary intellect remains undiminished.¹²

When Adorno read these lines in a selection of letters published by Erika Mann in 1965, he was, understandably, deeply hurt. It seemed that Mann had come out of the grave to desecrate the sacred friendship, in which the younger man had till then steadfastly and naively believed. Erika had included the letter in her collection deliberately—and not without rancour. She could not stand Adorno. A year after the selected letters came out, she explained her relationship with him to a friend. She knew Adorno all too well.

Forgive me, if you understand the matter otherwise and better than I: but in my experience, he is not only pathologically vain—his vanity going quite logically with a high degree of persecution mania—but, above all, a bluffer: quite consciously strewing sand in people's eyes; intentionally writing that incomprehensible stuff and only too often concealing plain ignorance behind his highly concentrated, all-encompassing expertise. For example, even in one of his specialist areas—Mahler—I've heard him talk bare-faced nonsense. Though naturally I should never have been able to catch him out on the spot and pin him down, if by chance Lotte Walter (Bruno's highly musical daughter) had not been standing with us and

¹¹ 5 July 1948: *Briefwechsel*, p. 34.

¹² Letter to Jonas Lesser, 15 October 1951, in Erika Mann, ed., *Thomas Mann. Briefe III, 1948–55*, Frankfurt [1965] 1979, p. 226.

supported me. Dorn—conclusively proved wrong—turned on his heel, foaming slightly at the mouth, and left us.¹³

Erika's desire to belittle Adorno was highly developed. But it did not just reflect personal resentment. In 1963 the Frankfurt student paper *Diskus* dug up a review Adorno had written in 1934, praising the way in which some poems by Baldur von Schirach, leader of the Hitler Youth, had been set to music. In the same year he had—as Ludwig Marcuse, another Adorno-hater, wrote to Erika—attacked the Jewish composer Kalman, describing his operetta as a botch-up that, 'given the solemnity of what is taking place in Germany today, can only be termed cynical'.¹⁴

Even before she heard about the Kalman review, Erika had composed a bitterly sarcastic letter to Adorno about the *Diskus* scandal. Her father would surely not have taken his youthful vagaries amiss; Adorno had elegantly extracted himself from the little affair, over which the grass would surely grow with unusual alacrity. Thanking her effusively for this declaration of solidarity, Adorno took every word at face value. His weak antennae had completely missed her long-standing antipathy. Poor fellow! Erika had to write a second letter to set him straight. He should have known, she explained, that she had never found anything remotely amusing about matters relating to Goebbels, von Schirach and Co. Adorno had not been a boy at the time:

Even if emigration seemed too heavy a fate for you to bear (while T. M. sat in voluntary exile), were you obliged to let such 'tactically' targeted pieces appear in print? Wasn't it rather a matter of sinister diligence? And T. M.? Do you really think your 'youthful vagaries' would 'not have troubled him'? How, indeed, would he have taken the matter? Would it have come to an open breach? Hardly. But he would have given you a dressing-down to make 'Wotan's rage' sound like harmless persiflage, and a residue of repugnance and distrust would have remained—ineradicably.¹⁵

Erika was not the only one in the Mann family to nurse a hatred of Adorno. Her brother Golo was convinced he had suffered a direct personal injury at the musical adviser's hands. In 1963 Adorno and

¹³ Letter to Waldemar Wahren, 27 April 1966, in Anna Zanco Prestel, *Erika Mann. Briefe und Antworten II*, Munich 1985, pp. 166ff.

¹⁴ *Die Musik*, vol. 26, no. 8; quoted in Ludwig Marcuse's letter to Erika Mann, 14 April 1963, in *Erika Mann. Briefe*, p. 132.

¹⁵ Letter to Adorno, 2 April 1963, in *Erika Mann. Briefe*, p. 130.

Horkheimer had, he felt certain, helped to block his appointment to a chair at the University of Frankfurt, by writing a letter to the Minister of Culture in Hessen whose implication, however qualified, was that a homosexual would not be a suitable choice for the position. It hardly needs to be said that Golo's father would never have pardoned Adorno, if this were true. But Adorno himself had a few vagaries to forgive, in the beginning. What lay at the core of their relationship, during those first golden days in California? Though he was later pushed to the periphery of Mann's world, did Adorno never once stand at its secret centre?

Brazen larceny?

They had first met in 1943 at the home of Horkheimer, Mann's neighbour in Pacific Palisades. Mann had already begun drafting his *Faustus* novel when, in July of that year, Adorno gave him the first part of his *Philosophy of Music*. Mann consumed it straight away and noted in his diary on July 26th: 'Finished reading the piece by Adorno. Moments of considering how Adrian should be presented.' On October 4th he was invited to supper at Adorno's house, where he read aloud from the *Faustus* manuscript—a passage about Beethoven, written under the influence of his host. The next day Adorno received a gentle warning in his first letter from Mann: a soft tinkling of alarm bells. What Adorno had written about the encounter of Death and Greatness was crucially important for Leverkühn's stammering music teacher, Kretzschmar:

Don't be surprised if he takes up that kind of thing in his torrent of talk. I will not shrink from any *montage* in this case—nor have I ever, if it comes to that. What belongs in my book must go in, and will be absorbed by it too.¹⁶

From that point on, collaboration between the two grew ever closer, till Mann could not ignore the fact that it might invite the disagreeable term 'plagiarism'. In December 1945 he handed the *Faustus* manuscript to Adorno and addressed a long and famous letter to him and to posterity:

Dear Dr. Adorno, I want to write to you about the manuscript I recently left with you; perhaps you are on the point of reading it. In writing to you I don't feel as if I were interrupting my work.

¹⁶ 5 October 1943: *Briefwechsel*, p. 9.

It thrills me to know that this strange, perhaps impossible novel (what there is of it) is in your hands, for in the states of weariness which come to me more and more often, I ask myself whether I would not do better to drop it. So whether I stick at it depends somewhat on your response.

This is a very skilful beginning. The Nobel prize winner puts the matter in the hands of an unknown scholar: should he continue or abandon his great novel on Faust? This gesture of humility from a tired old man is so flattering that annoyance at the extent of his borrowings becomes out of the question. After that elegant opening, Mann moves on to deal with the source of potential vexation. The word he had already underscored in his first letter recurs:

What I chiefly wish to emphasize is the principle of *montage*, which peculiarly and perhaps outrageously runs through this entire book without any attempt at concealment.

As examples of his 'brazenly larcenous' appropriations, Mann offers a menu of Nietzsche, Tchaikovsky's patroness, Shakespeare's sonnets, from all of which he has borrowed liberally. Adorno should perhaps console himself that he is not the only victim. But the thief is forced to admit that invoking Molière's *Je prends mon bien où je le trouve* does not quite suffice to excuse such behaviour, since,

The case is more difficult—not to say more scandalous—when it is a matter of appropriating materials which are themselves already intellectual artefacts—that is, when a real literary borrowing is involved, performed with an air that what has been filched is just good enough to serve one's own pattern of ideas. You rightly presume that when I say this, I have in mind the brazen—and I hope not altogether doltish—snatches at certain parts of your essays on the philosophy of music. These borrowings cry out all the more for apology since for the time being the reader cannot identify them; there is no way to call his attention to them without breaking the illusion. (Perhaps a footnote: 'See Adorno—'? Impossible!)

At last, the apology is on the table. But Mann turns it thoroughly inside out, before offering this thanks—or is it a plea?

The fact is that my own musical education has scarcely gone beyond the late Romantics, and you have given me the ideas about contemporary music that I needed for a book which, among other things, deals with the *situation of art*. My initiate's ignorance required precise details . . . to enhance the illusion and serve the purposes of the pattern; it's a matter of your willingness now to step in and correct them, wherever these details (which I have

not borrowed exclusively from you) are awry, misleading, or expressed in a way which experts might find ludicrous.

Mark how subtly, yet impudently, that second cat starts to slip out of the bag. Mann suggests they now look to the future. The function of his letter is not just to apologize for past misdeeds but to announce those to come. *It's a matter of Adorno's willingness now to step in and correct Mann's mistakes.* What does he mean by 'now'? Simply: it is not enough that Adorno has been robbed; he should remain at the disposal of the thief. After a brief detour to the enthusiastic praise he has received from other musicians about the work as it stands, Mann comes to the point:

I have pushed the novel along to the point where Leverkühn, at the age of thirty-five, in a first wave of euphoric inspiration and in an incredibly short time, composes his principal work, or first principal work, the *Apocalipsis cum figuris*, after the fifteen Dürer prints, or directly after the text of the Revelation. Here the problem is to imagine and characterize convincingly a work which I think of as a very German product, an oratorio with orchestra, choruses, solos, a narrator. I am really writing this letter to keep my mind on the matter, which as yet I don't dare attack. What I need are a few significant, suggestive specific details (one can manage with only a few) which will give the reader a plausible, even a convincing picture. Would you like to think it over with me: how the work—I mean Leverkühn's work—can more or less be described; what sort of music you would write if you were in league with the devil; could you suggest one or two musical characteristics to further the illusion?²⁷

This question was the purpose of his letter, as Mann himself confessed. He was asking a great deal from his counsellor, though in an enormously flattering fashion. How did Adorno respond? He listened and obeyed. He gave Mann not merely one or two suggestive details but actually wrote all the pieces by the fictitious composer. His sketches have been published in the Appendix to their exchange of letters, and what they show conclusively is that Adorno more or less invented Leverkühn's creations, note for note, leaving the author with nothing to do but transpose them into supple prose. In addition, Adorno lent *Doctor Faustus* an intellectual cachet—through his philosophy of music, which was inseparable from the scores themselves—that Mann alone would never have been able to achieve. Adorno, it seems, had managed

²⁷ 30 December 1945: *Letters of Thomas Mann*, pp. 360–3; translation modified.

at last, just this once, to slip into the innermost chamber of the novelist's heart. Or so people have thought.

Masks for Mephistopheles

The central point of their relationship was *Doctor Faustus*, at whose core lies the famous twenty-fifth chapter, the devil's dialogue, in the course of which the devil assumes three different shapes. Of these, the middle—central—figuration speaks to Leverkühn about the desperate condition of art. In 1950, three years after the publication of *Doctor Faustus*, the Leipzig Germanist Hans Mayer believed he had discovered the model for this middle devil:

Meanwhile, however, in the great dialogue dealing with the fate of music and modern art, the picture has changed again. The devil now wears the horn-rimmed glasses of the intellectual; his effect on Leverkühn, by the way, is substantially more sympathetic. His temporary incarnation, meticulously described by Mann, astonishes us once more. We do not think we err in saying that this time Leverkühn's partner has taken on the features of that noteworthy musical theorist, 'the real secret counsellor', whom Mann consulted so extensively for the musical sections of the book. We are dealing with Theodor W. Adorno.¹⁸

Adorno pressed Mann for his reaction:

That the good Hans Mayer in his book has, among other things, suggested me as the physical model for your devil—with whom I have little more in common than those horn-rimmed glasses—will have astonished you no less than me; I was scarcely aware of my devilish features.¹⁹

Hitherto no one has taken Mann's answer very seriously. That the aforesaid devil thought and spoke exactly like Adorno was utterly indisputable—these were, after all, in part word-for-word quotations from him. Does that mean he was also the devil in flesh and blood? Mann's reply is unequivocal:

There is much that is commendably clever in Mayer's book, but it also often misses the mark; that the Devil should be described as a music scholar in your image is utterly absurd. Do you even wear horn-rimmed glasses? Beyond that, in any case, you have nothing in common.²⁰

¹⁸ Hans Mayer, *Thomas Mann: Werk und Entwicklung*, Berlin 1950, p. 370.

¹⁹ 6 July 1950: *Briefwechsel*, p. 72.

²⁰ 11 July 1950: *Briefwechsel*, p. 76.

Mann's dismissal of the imputation as 'absurd' prevented neither his contemporaries, nor posterity, from registering it as fact. The notion got about—the red herring slipped into the sea, where it has made its way for over half a century. Without exception, every reviewer of the recent publication of their correspondence mentioned Mann's famous portrayal of Adorno as the middle devil. Constant repetition has made the story a virtual cliché. Are we to doubt it only because of Mann's own disavowal? After all, there are those horn-rimmed glasses—which Adorno undoubtedly wore, and were certainly noticed by Mann. Then there is the question of his denials. Mann's habit of stone-walling is well-known—consider the case of Gerhart Hauptmann, the furious model for Peeperkorn, bespattered with red wine in *The Magic Mountain*. Adorno himself, moreover, did not balk at the association, but seemed to reconcile himself to it with a certain pride. He signed a letter to Mann, 'your old devil', and spoke with a touch of coquetry, the last time he wrote to him, of his 'satanic temper'.

Wrongly, since he was not intended. The canard has one disadvantage: it is not true. At first sight, all seems straightforward, since the external designation and to some extent job description of Leverkühn's demonic visitor match Adorno to a tee: 'a member of the intelligentsia, writer on art and music for the popular press, a theoretician and critic, who himself composes, so far as thinking allows him.' But this was only the visitor's professional identity, not his actual physiognomic portrait—in which, apart from the famous horn-rimmed spectacles, at least one other detail strikes the eye. After his first transformation, the devil

sat there no longer a rowdy losel, but changed for the better, I give my word. He now had on a white collar and a bow tie, horn-rimmed spectacles on his hooked nose. Behind them the dark, rather reddened eyes gleamed moistly. A mixture of sharpness and softness was on the visage; nose sharp, lips sharp, yet soft the chin with a dimple, a dimple in the cheek too—pale and vaulted the brow, out of which the hair retreats toward the top, yet from there to the sides thick, standing up black and woolly.²⁴

Adorno, it should be said, had never been conspicuous for his thick, woolly hair, not even in 1943. Ten years later, one of his students was to declare that the picture did not tally with its supposed original. Naturally enough, for the simple reason that Mann had chosen another model for his middle devil: Gustav Mahler. Mann had made Mahler's acquaintance

²⁴ Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, London 1999, pp. 237–8.

in Munich in 1910, after the dress rehearsal for his Eighth Symphony. Later he told Katia that it was the first time he had met a great man. After the symphony's celebrated première, Mann thanked Mahler in a letter that addressed him as the 'most serious and sacred artistic spirit of our times'. This was no mere formula; it stemmed from deep feeling, evident also in the telegram he sent to console the widowed Alma, when Mahler died:

For us, too, the news of your dear husband's death means the terrible and final conclusion to a long, daily uncertainty between fear and hope. Our heart bleeds too for this great and precious man . . . But stronger than all our pain must be the reflection, that the death of such a man presents the civilized world with an instance of immortality.²²

Mann did not use words like 'immortality' lightly. Nor did he hesitate to lend his share of it to Mahler's, eternalizing the great man in his own work. The hero of *Death in Venice*, Mann's most famous novella, is not just the descendant of a Bohemian bandmaster; nor does Gustav Aschenbach merely carry Mahler's first name. By coincidence, we have some very exact information on the circumstances of his creation. In 1921 the artist Wolfgang Born sent Mann a sequence of pictures inspired by his Venetian tale. Looking through them, Mann came upon a resemblance that struck him as 'exceptional and almost mysterious'. He wrote a preface to Born's collection:

Early in the summer of 1911, news of Gustav Mahler's death made its way into the conception of my story. I had been honoured by his acquaintance in Munich, where his burningly intense personality made the strongest impression upon me. I was staying on the island of Brioni when he passed away, and from there I followed the bulletins of his last hours, rather grandly related by the Viennese press; and the mingling of these convulsions with the impressions and ideas from which the novel emerged induced me not only to give the hero, abandoned to orgiastic dissolution, the first name of the great musician but also to lend him, in external matters, the mask of Mahler—feeling sure that readers would not recognize such a roundabout and well-concealed connexion.²³

Forty years later, readers still did not recognize the connexion, although the mask remained the same. The newspaper article that reported

²² Norman Lebrecht, *Gustav Mahler im Spiegel seiner Zeit*, Zürich 1990, p. 282.

²³ Thomas Mann, 'Vorwort zu einer Bildermappe', in Mann, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. II, Frankfurt 1974, pp. 583ff.

Mahler's death was discovered among Mann's papers; it carried a photograph of the composer. Set this beside Mann's description of *Doctor Faustus's* devilish musicologist, and it is clear that no image could be put more precisely into words. Mann has transcribed every physiognomic detail of Mahler's face—from the bald spot at his temple to the sharp lips of the broad pursy mouth, from the white collar with the bow-tie to the dimple in his chin and the second dimple in his cheek.

And if the photograph does not suffice, we have Mann's other, earlier description of Mahler as Gustav Aschenbach, and can put the two literary portraits side by side: Tadzio's admirer and Leverkühn's musical advisor. In both versions the subject is below average height; his hair is thinning on top and thick around the temples; he wears spectacles over a hook nose; he has a large mouth and a soft chin with a little notch in it. Both are striking for their mixture of sharp and soft. If the descriptions are essentially identical, so is their subject. Mahler is acknowledged to be the original for Aschenbach; and he, not Adorno, is the unacknowledged model for the visitor who enlightens Leverkühn on the state of modern music.

No one was better suited to the role. Mann's heart lay with the late Romantics; his education, as he said himself, had barely gone beyond them. Mahler was the only composer to make the transition from late Romanticism to the New Music, pioneered by his admirers Webern, Schönberg and Berg. Mahler, the great, the sacred artistic spirit, was the last composer Mann could keep up with—the last one he could still understand.

The 'sacredness' Mann thought he recognized in Mahler was mixed with something else. This brilliant, nervously twitching and foot-stamping little composer was portrayed by a remarkable number of his contemporaries as 'demonic', 'diabolical', even—literally—'devilish'. Little imagination was required to present him as a devil-figure. Mann required proportionally less, in that Mahler's life suffered a twist of fate which must have struck Mann as both demonic and familiar. Was every great man in fact inhuman, did everything waste away in his shade, was art not drawn from the life-blood of other people's sacrifices? The example of the composer stood symbolically for the answer. In 1901, Mahler began to set a number of Rückert's *Kindertodtenlieder* to music; a little while later, his five-year-old daughter died. Alma is said to have told him at

the time: 'For God's sake, you're painting the devil on the wall!' A series of bewildered notations mark the score of Mahler's unfinished Tenth Symphony, above the scribbled exclamation: 'The devil is dancing it with me—madness, lay your hands on me, o ye damned! Destroy me!'

Mann knew all these stories, not only from Alma's *Memoirs*, published in 1940, and the reminiscences of Natalie Bauer-Lechner but, above all, from his close friend in exile Bruno Walter, Mahler's student and one of his most fervent admirers. Walter himself is not unlike Serenus Zeitblom—gazing reverently up at the demonic composer and shuddering slightly. In *Doctor Faustus*, the devil calls on Leverkühn in 1911, the year of Mahler's death, and instructs him in the intricacies of artistic 'breakthrough'—which can be achieved only through demonic inspiration. How will Leverkühn make such a leap? Mann adopts Mahler's example. Leverkühn uses his five-year-old nephew Nepomuk for inspiration, and composes with the child in constant view, until the Devil snatches him away. In despair, Leverkühn, like Mahler, blames himself. The late work of both the fictional and the factual composer is a gigantic lamentation on the subject of loss—in which at last Leverkühn makes his breakthrough.

Adorno's devilish muse

Perhaps this is enough to indicate with what good reason Mann chose Mahler as the model for his middle devil, and why his inner sanctum remained forever closed to Adorno. A difficult question remains. How much of this background did Adorno know? Vanity can make one shrewd as well as blind. He may have been so flattered by the success of his musical suggestions that he never recognized the real model for the devil's portrait, never saw through the horn-rimmed spectacles Mann used to disguise his tempter.

But the real paradox is this: Adorno also used Mahler as his secret model when he sketched out Leverkühn's compositions. Erika, in her angry letter, rightly named Mahler as Adorno's particular area of expertise. In his memories of Berg, Adorno wrote that the march in 'Wozzeck' appeared to be written 'by Schönberg too and Mahler, and this struck me at the time as the true New Music'. Berg, Schönberg and Mahler—the stuff from which Leverkühn was composed. The father and creative genius in this triumvirate is Mahler.

Adorno's work on Mahler—subtitled *A Musical Physiognomy*—came out in 1960, five years after Mann's death. It is a pinnacle of musicology, scattering an abundance of telling observations and electrifying, Proustian comparisons on every side. Mann would never have been able to put down the pencil he used to mark significant passages in his reading. And he would have noted that his hero Leverkühn lay at the heart of the book. The notion of the 'breakthrough' crops up on almost every page of the first chapter, in hammering repetition. Of course, the breakthrough forms the most significant leitmotif in *Doctor Faustus*, and the 'second immediacy', with which Gustav Aschenbach struggles, is related to it. This also appears in Adorno's study, word for word; Mahler's later work is said to exemplify it. At one point Adorno even calls our attention to these secret connexions, in a somewhat ominous fashion. 'The imaginary Adrian Leverkühn', he reveals, 'got more from Mahler than just the high G of those cellos at the end of the first *Nachtmusik* in the Seventh Symphony'; the fictional composer 'selected core principles' from Mahler as the guiding logic of his own work.

In other words: the distinctly flesh-and-blood Adorno selected central ideas from Mahler to place at the heart of Leverkühn's music. A list of parallels between the two would show how closely Adorno based his invented composer on the real one. The cello's high G, borrowed from Mahler, is quite simply *the* note of the whole novel: Leverkühn's last composition ends on it, the final tone shining like a ray through the night, offering as its only consolation the 'hope on the other side of hopelessness, the transcendence of despair'. Mahler's works conclude in the belief, according to Adorno, that 'joy is still unattainable, and no transcendence other than that of longing remains'.

Two almost identical portraits of Mahler: but how much did Adorno know about Mann's, or Mann of Adorno's? According to Mann's diary, Mahler's name came up only once in their conversations, and never in their correspondence. The possibility remains—a rather curious notion—that they carried on like the two owlish Scotsmen, confident in their deceptions as they called back and forth to each other from either side of the high garden wall. Except that in the case of Mann and Adorno two men of genius were involved, and no wife took the trouble to clear the matter up.

THE DUTCH DISTRESS

AS THOUGH A BOLT of lightning had illuminated a previously unseen landscape—tense with frustration and social resentment—the general elections of May 2002 revealed the prosperous, liberal-minded Netherlands in a harsh new glare. The shock of a political murder, and the entry into government of a newly hatched political party with a radical anti-immigration programme, precipitated a year of turbulence in Dutch politics from which the country has emerged shaken, if not stirred. The aim of this article is to examine the underlying dynamics of this histrionic irruption, and to consider what its longer term effects might be. We will start, however, with an account of the outsider candidate, before going on to examine the socio-economic changes that two decades of neoliberal restructuring have wrought on the Dutch ‘polder’ model, and the ways in which these have affected the political system.

Media reports have described Pim Fortuyn as an outsider but he was, in fact, very much a part of the Dutch political class and had many supporters in establishment circles. Born in 1948 to a conservative Catholic family in Velsen, in the northwest of the country, Fortuyn was active in the student movement of the 1960s and worked as a lecturer/reader on (Marxian) sociology at the University of Groningen from 1972 until 1988; his doctoral thesis focused on ‘Social and Economic Policies in the Netherlands, 1945–49’. In 1988 he quit Groningen to set up his own ‘consultancy’ in Rotterdam, producing a string of books and articles on society and politics while making a name for himself as a flamboyant maverick, columnist and guest speaker; meanwhile retaining for some years a part-time chair in sociology at Erasmus University. His targets were the bureaucracy—always an easy one—as signalled in his 1991 *A Future Without Civil Servants*, and he developed, from the mid-90s onwards, a seemingly more

iconoclastic anti-immigrant stance, laid out in 1997 in his *Against the Islamization of Our Culture*.

Nevertheless—despite the media coverage—Fortuyn's political career was markedly unsuccessful until November 2001, when he was appointed leader of a small but fairly dynamic populist party, *Leefbaar Nederland*—*leefbaar* is liveable, in Dutch—with a strong base in local city councils. The four months of his tenure there were marked by internal conflict. Fortuyn's attacks on Islam as 'an extremely backward culture' and his *Le Pen*-ite assertion that 'The Netherlands are full' were ill received by the majority faction of libertarian-green multiculturalists within *Leefbaar Nederland*, and in February 2002 Fortuyn was thrown out.

The following month, financed by rich friends in the business community—real-estate agents and property developers, in particular—he started his own party: *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*. The LPF had no centre other than its charismatic, anti-Islamic leader, and the neo-populist themes that he bequeathed to it.¹ First among these was the anti-establishment pose—lambasting the parties of government for their backroom dealings and lack of ideological clarity, as well as their inability to reduce crime and solve problems that everyone recognized in health care, education and transport. According to Fortuyn, the trouble with these public services was excessive bureaucracy: public provision could be mightily improved by firing a quarter of the civil servants. Running government as a private business would deliver far more, without requiring any additional tax funding; and could be made much more accountable. Fortuyn pledged to include 'successful captains of industry' in his LPF government. Secondly, Fortuyn argued forcefully for the superiority of the Enlightenment norms and values of Western civilization, here extended to include sexual tolerance. The actual experience of the Islamic world in this regard was naturally ignored in favour of random quotation from the most barren neo-fundamentalist preaching; which, in turn, was used as evidence that non-Western societies, Muslim ones in particular, were inferior to the West in both civilization and culture.

The implication for immigrants to the Netherlands was that all adjustment should come from their side. What are the facts here? Immigrants make up just under 17 per cent of the Netherlands' total population of

¹ See also Jan Martijnissen, *Schrale rijkdom: de erfenis van acht jaar paars*, Rotterdam 2002.

16 million—around 2.7 million altogether. Of these, first and second-generation Islamic migrants—mainly from Turkey and Morocco—make up just over 670,000, or 4.3 per cent of the total population. Another 729,000 immigrants, 4.5 per cent of the total population, originate from other EU countries, while some 810,000, 5 per cent of the total, come from former Dutch colonies, mainly Surinam and Indonesia. As in much of Western Europe, the majority of non-Western immigrants are city dwellers, constituting around 30 per cent of the populations of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague; of these, just under half would be Muslims, whose forebears come from a variety of countries. Unemployment rates for non-Western immigrants are high—9 per cent, compared to 3 per cent for non-migrants in 1999. The proportion of low-income households is roughly 3 times higher than the norm, and average real income is some 25 per cent lower than that of non-immigrants. They are significantly under-represented in higher education and over-represented in school drop-out rates. Within the non-Western immigrant population, the socio-economic position of Muslims tends to be the worst.²

Unlike Le Pen in France and Haider in Austria, Fortuyn did not advocate throwing out immigrants who were already in the Netherlands; but he argued that 'they must accept the country's norms and values'. Though his arguments were not explicitly racist—the top echelon of the LPF actually included a number of second-generation immigrants, and Fortuyn's position, as we have seen, was essentially cultural-nationalist rather than ethnic—his anti-Islamic stance did attract right-wing, if not racist, voters, who formed a significant proportion of the LPF electorate, and cheered his call for the Netherlands to withdraw unilaterally from the EU's Schengen treaty and toughen Dutch border controls. Fortuyn's outspoken views shattered the prevailing, politically correct silence on issues of race and culture. Their appeal to Dutch voters strongly increased, it has to be said, following the events of 9.11 and the consequent attack on Afghanistan. They also made him popular with the local Hindustani movement, consisting largely of migrants from Surinam, who advised its members to vote for the LPF.

Lacking any programme beyond this demagogic confection of ultra-neoliberal neo-nationalism, Fortuyn nevertheless succeeded in paralysing most of the mainstream party leaders and making them—Prime

² See CBS, *Allochtonen in Nederland*, Heerlen/Voorburg 2002.

Minister Wim Kok in particular—look like fools: annoyed by him, but unable to respond. Fortuyn became the voice of the dissatisfied, immigrants included, and of the young. At first hostile, the media's tone generally grew milder. Then, on 6 May 2002, nine days before the election, Fortuyn was assassinated by a gunman, apparently acting alone. A bizarre state of tension—incomprehension, mixed with anger and terror—gripped the country after the assassination. Political debate and electoral campaigning came to a halt. Many politicians—especially those involved in the ruling coalition—received hate-mail, even death threats, accusing them of indirect responsibility for the assassination.

The election results on 15 May 2002 were equally dramatic (see Table 1). The turnout was high—up to 79 per cent, when closer to 70 per cent had been predicted on the basis of past trends. The ruling centre-left Partij van de Arbeid lost nearly half its parliamentary seats, dropping from 45 to 23; its free-market coalition partner, the Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, fell from 38 seats to 24, while the third partner in government, the centre-liberal D66, dropped from 14 to 7. The centre-right Christen-Democratisch Appèl emerged as the largest single party, winning votes from both the VVD and the PvdA to gain 43 seats, up from 29. But it was the late Fortuyn's LPF, which came from nowhere to win 17 per cent of the popular vote and 26 seats—thus becoming the second largest party in the new parliament—that stole the world media's attention.

Exit polls revealed that almost 30 per cent of LPF voters had not participated in the elections of 1998; 35 per cent of them had previously supported the free-market VVD, while 20 per cent had voted PvdA. The LPF was, overwhelmingly, the choice of the young, emerging as the largest party among the 18–25 year-old cohort. Its support was concentrated in the urbanized west—the so-called Randstad; it did particularly well in cities such as Rotterdam and The Hague, in which voter turnout is traditionally low.³ Interestingly, there was no correlation between income level and LPF support, although the party did better among those with a low level of educational attainment (attracting

³ The LPF fared badly among the over-65s, where 'pillarization'—through which civil-society institutions, including trade unions and political parties, are formed on confessional lines—is still quite strong. A process of 'de-pillarization' began in the 1960s, with the result that such allegiances are entirely absent among the young. A further outcome has been a significant increase in the number of floating voters, now around 35 per cent. Election data: NRC *Handelsblad*, 16 May 2002.

TABLE 1: *Results of the General Elections: The Netherlands, 1989–2003*

	1989		1994		1998		2002		2003	
	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%
Christian Democrats (CDA)	54	35.3	34	22.2	29	18.4	43	27.9	44	28.6
Lijsd Pim Fortuyn (LPF)	-	-	-	-	-	-	26	17.0	8	5.7
Free-Market Liberals (VVD)	22	14.7	31	20.0	38	24.7	24	15.4	28	17.9
Social Democrats (PvdA)	49	31.9	37	24.0	45	29.0	23	15.1	42	27.3
Green Party (GroenLinks)	6	4.1	5	3.5	11	7.3	10	7.0	8	5.1
Socialist Party (SP)	0	0.4	2	1.3	5	3.5	9	5.9	9	6.3
Liberal Party (D66)	12	7.9	24	15.5	14	9.0	7	5.1	6	4.1
Leefbaar Nederland	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.6	-	-
Small Christian parties	6	4.1	7	4.8	8	5.0	6	4.2	5	3.7
Others	1	0.6	10	8.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	150	100.0	150	100.0	150	100.0	150	100.0	150	100.0

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, The Hague

TABLE 2: *Composition of Coalition Governments: 1982–2003*

	<i>Prime Minister</i>	<i>Participating Parties</i>
1982–86	Ruud Lubbers (CDA) I	CDA and VVD
1986–89	Ruud Lubbers (CDA) II	CDA and VVD
1989–94	Ruud Lubbers (CDA) III	CDA and PvdA
1994–98	Wim Kok (PvdA) I	PvdA, VVD and D66
1998–2002	Wim Kok (PvdA) II	PvdA, VVD and D66
2002	Jan Peter Balkenende (CDA) I	CDA, VVD and LPF
2003–	Jan Peter Balkenende (CDA) II	CDA and PvdA*

* In negotiation at the time of writing
Source: <http://www.overheid.nl/>

21 per cent of these votes) or a medium level (18 per cent) than a higher level (11 per cent). The new LPF deputies—a mixed bunch, now leaderless and vying bitterly among themselves—thus entered a coalition government with the CDA and VVD, taking four cabinet seats under the premiership of the CDA's Jan Peter Balkenende.

North Sea success

The question, of course, was how all this could happen in the Netherlands—a rich country with a long social-democratic tradition, a growing economy, low unemployment and, by international standards, good public services and social security. Could something be amiss with the 'polder model'? Within hours of the assassination, Kok had dismissed the suggestion that the political establishment or, by extension, the prevailing free-market policies of the last decades could be in any way responsible for what had happened. Instead, it was argued that the widespread sense of dissatisfaction that exploded into the open after Fortuyn's death was the result of rising expectations—a classic example of a population that was 'doing better, feeling worse'. In recent years, the Dutch economy has won high praise from foreign commentators and central bankers alike for its apparent success in combining fiscal conservatism and welfare restructuring with healthy growth rates and job creation. In 1996, the *Economist* typically hailed the Netherlands as 'a significant departure from the weakened continental model of slackening economic growth, rising unemployment and the financial predicament of the welfare state'; and for some time, the figures continued to improve.⁴

All this was in sharp contrast with the position in the early 1980s. The solidly corporatist Dutch economy had emerged from the 1979–81 recession with a 'broad' unemployment rate—including those eased out of the labour market through disability or early retirement schemes—of around 27 per cent. It was, as one sympathetic observer remarked, 'perhaps the most spectacular employment failure in the advanced capitalist world'.⁵ The response of Ruud Lubbers's CDA–VVD coalition

⁴ *Economist*, 12 October 1996. What follows draws from the following sources: Jelle Visser and Anton Hemerijck, 'A Dutch Miracle'. Job growth, welfare reform and corporatism in the Netherlands, Amsterdam 1997; Lei Delsen, *Exit poldermodel? Sociaal-economische ontwikkelingen in Nederland*, Assen 2000; OECD, *Economic Surveys: Netherlands*, Paris 2002; 'Survey of the Netherlands', *Economist*, 4 May 2002.

⁵ Göran Therborn, *Why Some People are More Unemployed Than Others*, London 1986.

government was to maintain the fraying corporatist model, based on close employer–trade union cooperation, using organized labour to squeeze itself through a policy of voluntary wage restraint. Meanwhile, relatively generous disability and early retirement schemes cushioned the pain of industrial restructuring, with the rising cost borne by increased tax and national-insurance contributions.⁶

The 1989 election saw the formation of a new CDA–PvdA coalition government, under the premiership of Lubbers and with Kok as finance minister.⁷ At the same time, the monetarist criteria for further European integration, soon to be enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty, were used to legitimize harsh cuts in public spending, to meet Brussels's demands for reduced tax rates and fiscal deficits. The Lubbers–Kok government thus set about the drastic tightening of eligibility conditions and reduction in benefits for disability and early-retirement schemes. In 1991 the unions staged the Netherlands' largest ever postwar demonstration against the cutbacks; to no avail. The bargaining position of labour vis-à-vis capital had weakened with the liberalization of international capital markets and the threat of relocation; it had become easier for firms to sack their workers outright rather than shift them onto disability pensions. Both governing parties were punished in the 1994 elections, with the PvdA losing a quarter of its votes; against all expectations, however, it still emerged as the largest party in parliament due to the even steeper fall off

⁶ The CDA was formed in 1980 through the federation of a number of older Christian parties—the Catholic Peoples' Party (KVP), the Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) and the Dutch-reformed Christian Historical Union (CHU). Its stance has much in common with the German CDU—family values, social justice, environmental stewardship, corporate decision-making structures and a strong role for the state in economic management—although the CDA is less anti-socialist, having strong links with a major Christian trade union. Thanks to its size and centrist position, the CDA and its predecessors had appeared an essential factor in any Dutch government. The VVD, formed in 1948, is hard-right on economic questions but 'liberal' on cultural and moral issues such as gay rights and euthanasia (though definitely not on drug tolerance).

⁷ The PvdA, successor to the Social Democratic Labour Party founded in 1894, was formed in 1946 and, as a coalition partner, played a major role in the construction of the Dutch welfare state during the 1950s. During the 1970s, and particularly as the dominant party in the Den Uyl government of 1973–77, the PvdA followed a strongly redistributive programme. Exclusion from government by a centre-right coalition between 1977 and 1989 proved a traumatizing experience. The PvdA shifted to the right, eventually accepting that a slimmed-down welfare state can only be sustained within the constraints set by the private sector.

of CDA support; Kok was asked by the Palace to form a new government. Here came the second shock: for the first time since 1918, the Christian Democrats were condemned to the opposition benches. Kok preferred to form a coalition with D66 and the VVD.⁸

Such a union between centre-left and radical free-marketeers was not as unlikely as it might sound. The PvdA had—long before New Labour in Britain or the SPD in Germany—shucked off its earlier social-democratic ideology and replaced it with one that was fundamentally more market-friendly. Not only were its views on social issues thus far closer to the VVD than to the traditionalist Christian Democrats; the PvdA also now shared the ultra-liberals' hostility to the old corporatist model of joint employer–trade union sovereignty over social-policy administration, still ardently defended by the CDA.

The Kok government now launched upon a major intensification of the neoliberal programme, aimed at the complete dismantling of corporatist structures and the thoroughgoing implementation of Anglo-Saxon practices, through the reduction of corporate taxes and the deregulation and marketization of labour, transport, energy and communications. This capital-friendly agenda was garnished with a few projects for re-integrating the long-term unemployed into the labour market by means of employment subsidies; making use of the very lowest pay scales on the grounds that this would help create jobs for the unskilled.

By the end of the 1990s, buoyed by rising equity and real-estate prices, the aggregate figures of the Kok years appeared excellent. Dutch GDP had grown by an average 2.9 per cent per annum, much faster than the EU rate. In terms of GDP per capita, the Netherlands had moved up from tenth to fifth out of the EU 15.⁹ Official unemployment had fallen sharply to 2.7 per cent in 2001, the lowest in the OECD, with over 1.4 million new jobs created since 1990 and the labour-force participation

⁸ The liberal-democratic D66 was founded in 1966 by ex-members of VVD and PvdA. Its electoral support has shown no clear trend, its fortunes varying with the popularity of its leader. It achieved its highest vote—15.5 per cent—in 1994.

⁹ In 1991, Luxembourg had the highest per capita GDP in Western Europe, followed by Sweden, Denmark, West Germany, Finland, Austria, France, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. In 2001, the ranking was Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, Sweden, the Netherlands. See European Commission, *European Economy*, no. 72, Brussels 2001.

rate increased from 59 to 67 per cent. The government's fiscal position was enviable: for the first time since the 1970s, the government realized a (structural) surplus of 0.3 per cent of GDP in 2000, rising to 0.9 per cent in 2001. That this was achieved despite a decline of tax receipts, from an average 41.1 per cent of GDP during 1991–94 to 39.2 per cent in 2001, and with public investment remaining stagnant at around 2.5 per cent, indicates the extent of the retrenchment in government current expenditure. The Dutch public debt fell to 54 per cent of GDP in 2001, compared to 80 per cent in 1994.

There were, of course, the usual grumbles about deteriorating provision in the increasingly underfunded and marketized public sector, with staffing problems and unprecedented waiting lists becoming a chronic feature of the health service. The student–teacher ratio is higher in the Netherlands than in most EU countries, and teachers' pay below average. Cost cutting to improve the accounts of the country's railways prior to privatization had led to mounting complaints of delays and overcrowded trains. Nevertheless, it was widely expected that, on the basis of the GDP and employment growth rates, the PvdA–VVD–D66 coalition would retain their majority in the general election of 15 May 2002, as they had in 1998.¹⁰

It was the impact of Pim Fortuyn that shattered this complacency, revealing the broad degree of dissatisfaction that existed within this apparently staid and prosperous society. To understand the structural origins of this discontent and the consequent shift to the right, it is necessary to examine more closely the profound socio-economic changes that underlie the Dutch 'success story'—itself to a large degree dependent on the rising real-estate and stock markets of the late 1990s. In what follows, we will argue that the replacement of the consensus-oriented corporatist relations of the post-war period by the anonymous, globalized and highly

¹⁰ The PvdA endeavoured to follow Washington's foreign-policy agenda just as closely as its economic one. The attempt to be 'the best boy in NATO's class' led to the offer of Dutch troops as 'peace keepers' in Srebrenica, in 1995. The full truth has yet to emerge, but it is clear that these forces had, at best, turned their backs upon—at worst, participated in, by separating the women and children from the men—the massacre of some 7,000 Muslims in the UN safe haven that they were supposed to be guarding. A government-sponsored report, albeit of limited scope, was published in April 2002. The facts it documented were sufficiently damaging to lead to the resignation of the Kok government just weeks before the May 2002 election.

competitive structures of the neoliberal order has left large numbers of Dutch citizens feeling insecure, atomized and powerless. If these tensions were initially hidden by the 'wealth effect' of the bubble years, they are now emerging all the more forcefully as the brittle nature of the late 1990s prosperity becomes clear. Here we will focus primarily on changing labour relations, the internationalization of Dutch capitalism and the stock-marketization of household wealth.

Changing labour relations

Job creation has been claimed as the Kok government's greatest success, differentiating the Netherlands from the high unemployment levels prevailing in Germany and France. It should be noted, however, that most of the 1.4 million newly created Dutch jobs of the 1990s have been low-skill, low-productivity, and hence low-paid in nature—in other words, marginal jobs, the first to be cut during a downturn. Moreover, 50 per cent of those created between 1994 and 2000 were part-time, and 40 per cent were 'flexible'—that is, temporary jobs with a contract period of less than one year; jobs via manpower agencies and jobs-on-call; the share of such employment rising to over 12 per cent of the total by 1998. Most of those thus employed were newcomers to the labour market—young entrants, or women rejoining the work force. In 2000, 'broad unemployment', including 'discouraged workers' as well as the 'disguised unemployed' absorbed in disability or early retirement schemes, remained at the staggeringly high rate of 23.7 per cent.¹² There was only a small increase in full-time, permanent jobs, for which competition—along Thurovian lines—significantly increased: as 75 per cent of vacancies were filled by candidates with educational qualifications in excess to those required by the job description, less qualified candidates were pushed into taking lower-skilled jobs, while the low skilled were pushed into unemployment.¹³

Increased competition also underlies the structural rise in hours of overwork, the rise in work pressure reported by employees—significantly higher in the Netherlands than in other EU countries—and the decline

¹² Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, *De sociale staat van Nederland 2001*, The Hague 2001.

¹³ Wiemer Salverda, 'Is there more to the Dutch miracle than just a lot of part-time jobs?', *mimeo*, University of Groningen 1999; Lei Delsen, *Exit poldermodel?*, Paul de Beer, *Over werken in de postindustriële samenleving*, The Hague 2001.

in perceived job security. The proportion of Dutch employees experiencing high work pressure increased by 10 per cent between 1996 and 1999. Those enduring a high pace of work increased from 38 per cent in 1994 to 42 per cent in 1999, exceeding the EU average by more than 10 percentage points. It is noteworthy that work-related stress rises with the skill-intensity of the job: 53 per cent of high-skilled workers experience high work pressure; the corresponding percentages for low-skilled workers is 32 per cent. Work-related stress has recognized consequences for employees' health: 13 per cent of employees working under high pressure suffer from serious sleeping disorders, compared to 8 per cent for employees working under low work pressure. Work-related fatigue is also on the rise: of all Dutch employees, 22 per cent were classified as (mentally) exhausted in 1998; rising to 23 per cent in 1999 and 25 per cent—a quarter of the work force—in 2001.³ The number of those using antidepressant drugs increased by 50 per cent between 1996 and 2000, rising to 800,000 or 5 per cent of the Dutch population.

As a corollary of the large increase in marginal jobs, labour-market segmentation has significantly increased—permanent versus 'flexible' workers, full-time versus part-time, employed versus unemployed—with a consequent growth in inequality. Firstly, unemployment is concentrated within particular sectors, with the burden borne by ethnic minorities and low-skilled workers well above the OECD average. Secondly, the differential between low and high wages, which had already increased substantially during the 1980s, has grown still starker: while the gross hourly wage of the 10th percentile worker increased by 3 per cent during 1990–98, wages of the median and 90th percentile increased by 8 per cent. As a result of the strong growth of low-productivity, low-wage, often subsidized employment, we are now witnessing a phenomenon that is entirely new to the country: the 'working poor', people having a job, but with a 'low' income, defined as falling below the 1979 subsistence level.

Low-wage earners, in turn, have been better off than those dependent on the social-security system: as an outcome of the welfare retrenchment, the value of minimum social-security benefits and of average disability pensions declined in real terms throughout the 1990s. Not surprisingly, the proportion of households living on a subsistence income remained

³ See the longitudinal cohort study of work-related fatigue by researchers of the University of Maastricht: 'Bijna een op de vier werknemers is psychisch vermoeid', 1 February 2001.

stagnant—over 10 per cent—despite the prolonged GDP growth. In contrast, base incomes of top managers increased, on average, by around 14 per cent per year during the 1990s, while the number of millionaires more than tripled. Recent tax reforms are expected to increase income inequality further. Finally, the differential between public-sector and private-sector wages for comparable jobs, which already amounted to more than 25 per cent in 1990, has grown still wider.¹⁴

The liberalization and flexibilization of labour markets has thus led to a segmentation of the Dutch labour force into three distinct fractions: higher-paid workers, often on a permanent contract, whose real incomes have substantially increased; lower-paid workers, often on a temporary or flexible contract, whose real earnings have either stagnated or decreased; those dependent on the social security system, whose real incomes have declined. The destruction of the postwar corporatist regime, however—and with it, the relative stability and security it offered the individual worker—has had a negative effect on every fraction. Welfare retrenchment has clearly worsened the plight of those dependent on social security, while for those in low-income, ‘flexible’ jobs the reforms have meant increased economic and personal pressure and growing insecurity. But even for higher-income workers, market liberalization has brought increased insecurity, as heightened competition has forced them to work longer hours, under more intense pressure, in jobs for which they may be overqualified yet which still lack any stable career prospects, and in which they must battle for promotion.

Internationalization of the Dutch economy

The increased integration of the Netherlands economy into the world market has strengthened these tendencies. During the 1990s, many Dutch firms invested abroad, buying up foreign firms—especially American ones, as a way into the US market—to such an extent that a major proportion of their sales and profits is now generated abroad. If the most notorious example is the food retailer, Ahold, currently under investigation for Enron-style account-rigging, others include the computer firm, Getronics; the insurance company, Aegon; food-supplements producer, Numico; publishing companies Reed Elsevier, Wolters Kluwer

¹⁴ Arjen van Witteloostuijn et al, ‘Hoera, het gaat goed’, *Economisch Statistische Berichten*, 17 April 1998; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, *Poverty Monitor 2000* and *De sociale staat van Nederland*, The Hague 2000, 2001.

and VNU; the chip-waver manufacturer, ASML; the Anglo-Dutch multinational Unilever; office-products supplier, Buhrmann; and banks ABN-Amro and ING, which all have very substantial interests in the US. The shares of many important Dutch firms—Philips, Shell, ABN-Amro, Unilever and, until their suspension in February 2003, Ahold—are traded on the New York Stock Exchange. In 2001, more than 50 per cent of executive board members of the 25 firms listed on the Amsterdam Stock Exchange were of a foreign nationality.¹⁵

With the growing internationalization of Dutch firms, Anglo-Saxon approaches to management and corporate governance have made significant inroads into Dutch business practices, in the process transforming the Netherlands' traditional, relatively harmonious labour-capital relations. The maximization of 'shareholder value' is increasingly regarded as management's prime goal, imposing—in a situation of globalized capital markets—a permanent drive to raise productivity and reduce costs to please investors. The result is a constant restructuring of firms, even successful ones, and the institution of 'macho' management, à la GE's Jack Welch, in place of existing consensus-oriented business practices. The consequences of this change in business culture are enormous: the introduction of more mechanisms of control and supervision, a rise in work pressure, a decline in job security, a loss of social capital within firms and a withering of trust and commitment on both sides of the labour-capital relationship.¹⁶

Dutch firms no longer depend solely—or even primarily—on domestic developments but on exchange-rate movements and economic conditions abroad. On the one hand, this may mean that losses incurred elsewhere induce a firm to re-organize its—otherwise profitable—activities at home. On the other hand, prospects of higher profits or lower costs outside the Netherlands may induce firms to shift production

¹⁵ In 2002, the share of US sales as percentage of total annual sales was about 65 per cent for Ahold, 60 per cent for Elsevier and Numico, and above 50 per cent for Wolters Kluwer, VNU, Aegon and Buhrmann: *Het Financieel Dagblad*, 27 June 2002.

¹⁶ Out of thirty major Dutch firms listed on the Amsterdam Stock Exchange, four underwent a major restructuring operation between 1985–90; thirteen did so between 1990–95, and twenty-three did so between 1995–2000. This led to a cumulative job loss in these thirty firms of 44,000 jobs for 1990–95, and 160,000 jobs for 1995–2000: Arjen van Witteloostuijn, 'Après nous le déluge. De economie van egocentrische heibzucht', in Hans Schenk, ed., *Herpositionering van Ondernemingen, Preadviezen 2001*, Utrecht 2001.

abroad; a recent example being the decision of Philips to relocate its lighting division from Eindhoven to either Poland or China, with the threat that many of its Dutch employees will lose their jobs.¹⁷ Demands from employees—for higher wages or better working conditions—that might once have been attended to, can thus be rebutted by reference to anonymous external pressures, such as financial distress incurred abroad, or by threats to relocate production and employment.¹⁸

Conversely, many Dutch firms have been taken over by foreign companies whose prime interests lie elsewhere. Recent examples include the packaging company, Van Leer, taken over by a Finnish firm; container terminal operator ECT, taken over by a Hong Kong firm; paper manufacturer KPN, now owned by a South-African firm; the liquor company Bols, bought by a French firm; steel manufacturer Hoogovens, taken over by British Steel; and mobile-phone operator Telfort, bought up by British Telecom. DSM, a major chemical and pharmaceutical firm, sold its bulk-chemical divisions to a firm from Saudi Arabia, and VNU sold part of its publication activities to a Finnish media company. For most of these foreign owners, their Dutch interests are not strategic, and specific demands by local employees carry relatively little weight, being met by the argument that they have to conform to business-wide rules and practices. Once again, the Dutch employees are left powerless.

Stock-marketization of household wealth

The wealth of Dutch households has also become more dependent upon the vagaries of global financial developments through their growing personal involvement with the stock market. The proportion of households directly owning stock-market shares increased from 11 per cent in 1995 to 27 per cent in 2002. On average, in February 2002, Dutch households held about 18 per cent of their net wealth in shares, with a figure of around 13.5 per cent for lower-income households and about 18.4 per cent for those with middle or higher incomes. In addition, households are indirect share owners via their obligatory participation in pension funds and life-insurance schemes. These accumulated savings

¹⁷ 'Lichtgroep Philips zint op uitbesteding', *Het Financieel Dagblad*, 18 June 2002.

¹⁸ For further analysis of the effects of capital migration on labour leverage, see James Crotty, Gerald Epstein and Patricia Kelly, 'Multinational corporations in the neo-liberal regime', in Dean Baker, Gerald Epstein and Robert Pollin, eds, *Globalization and Progressive Economic Policy*, Cambridge 1998.

make up about 40 per cent of households' net wealth and, since more than 50 per cent of these funds are invested in stock markets, they constitute another 20 per cent of wealth held in shares—yielding an average (direct plus indirect) proportion of Dutch households' net wealth held in shares of around 38 per cent; substantially higher than that of other European countries.¹⁹

It should be pointed out that this stock-market dependency was largely policy-induced. Pension funds—including that of civil servants, the ABP—were actively encouraged to invest in equity, something that had not been allowed previously. The privatizations of former state enterprises such as the telecom firm KPN and the software company PinkRocade were, here as elsewhere, deliberately targeted at small investors and heavily publicized. As the issue of government bonds declined, in line with the fiscal deficit, and with real interest rates relatively low, households were tempted to reallocate their portfolio in favour of higher if riskier stock-market returns. The growth of household wealth during the 1990s has been increasingly dependent on rising share and house prices: in the period 1990–1995, this accounted for around 63 per cent of the increase in average household wealth; between 1995 and 2000 the proportion rose to 78 per cent.

After the bubble

Dutch real-estate prices rose on average by over 10 per cent per year during the 1990s. The prolonged rise, in conjunction with financial-sector deregulation and low interest rates, has encouraged a significant expansion in household borrowing, with a third of owner-occupiers taking out bank loans against an additional mortgage of their houses over the past six years. In the expectation that the real-estate price hike will continue, many house-buyers have also opted for a 'top loan'—that is, a bank loan in excess of the market value of the property. The proportion of top loans increased from about 15 per cent of total bank loans during 1986–90, to 36 per cent during 1991–95 and almost 50 per cent during 1996–2000. The result of all this has been a dramatic increase in household debt—the ratio, relative to households' disposable income,

¹⁹ Within the OECD, only US households have a higher stock-market involvement: De Nederlandsche Bank, 'Vermogensbeheer Nederlandse gezinnen onder de loep', *Kwartaalbericht*, June 2002, p. 31; Jan Maarten Slagter, 'Overvloed en onbehagen', *Het Financieel Dagblad*, 20 June 2002.

rising from 85 per cent in 1985 to 188 per cent in 2000. Households have mostly used their increased financial liquidity to invest in renovating their houses, but it has also gone to buy shares, purchase consumer durables or to pay for holidays. It is notable that lower-income households often used part of the liquidity to pay off other debts.

The 'wealth effect' of the share and real-estate bubble—inevitably fragile and short-lived—has played a major role in the Dutch economic expansion of the late 1990s. Estimates by the Dutch central bank indicate that the spending from real-estate related wealth gains raised Dutch GDP growth (in real terms) by 0.6 percentage points in 1998, 1 percentage point in 1999 and 0.7 percentage points in 2000. If the 'wealth effect' of rising equity prices is added to this, the impact on GDP growth is likely to be between 1 and 1.5 percentage points. In other words, around a third of the actual real GDP and employment growth during 1998–2000 has been caused by debt-based household spending.²⁰

The macro-economic fragility and unsustainability of this situation have become increasingly obvious. The bursting of the US bubble, from April 2000, was compounded by the effects of 9.11 and the Enron, Andersen and WorldCom scandals, themselves almost overshadowed by the darkening world political situation. By the eve of the May 2002 election, the growth of household wealth had come to an abrupt end and the index of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange, which rose above 700 points in 2000, had declined to around 400 points. Since then it has continued to fall—the plunge exacerbated by the Ahold scandal—to around 230 by mid-March 2003. Pension funds with large stock-market exposure are now facing solvency problems, and pension contributions are to be increased. The growth-rate of consumer spending declined from about 3.6 per cent per annum between 1995 and 2001 to 1.9 percent in 2002. With export volumes dropping due to depressed world-market conditions, real GDP growth fell to 0.3 percent in 2002, the lowest level in twenty years. The government's fiscal position has deteriorated rapidly—budget deficits are looming and the public-debt burden is predicted to increase. January 2003 recorded the highest rise in registered unemployment for almost two decades and private-sector estimates predict a loss of between 400,000 and 600,000 jobs in manufacturing

²⁰ The term 'debt-based' is not misplaced: the ratio of non-contractual (discretionary) savings to household disposable income declined from 5.6 per cent in 1995 to -1.3 per cent in 2000: Nederlandsche Bank, *Kwartaalbericht*, pp. 36, 31.

alone in the near future. Here again, small savers, employees and householders have been made to feel powerless in the face of global forces outside their control.

Social psychology of neoliberal globalization

If our analysis, that liberalization and deregulation have led to an increasing sense of economic and social insecurity among large numbers of people, is correct, why then did Dutch voters shift to the right, choosing parties—LPF, CDA, VVD—whose policies were ‘more market’, not less? In the Netherlands there was, after all, a choice: the Socialist Party, adamant supporters of a revitalized collective-democratic order, and staunchly opposed to the neoliberal agenda, had five seats in the Assembly on the eve of the 2002 elections and have, at times, been credited by the opinion polls with the potential for far more.²¹

The forces at stake here are obviously complex; but we would like to sketch out, if only very tentatively and incompletely, one set of factors that may be at play. The insights of social psychology would suggest that the increasingly anonymous and threatening world environment has two broader psycho-social effects: the exacerbation of what Erich Fromm once called ‘mutual human indifference’; and, relatedly, a loss of self-confidence as the ‘sense of self’ is determined by market success.²² The resulting feelings of helplessness and anxiety may be so frightening that they need to be repressed. One avenue of escape is submission to the demands of a larger social group and compulsive conformity to its norms, yielding a sense of belonging in which the discrepancy between ‘I’ and the external world disappears and providing a factitious security and temporary abeyance of doubt.

A significant avenue for such an escape is provided by the market itself, through means of competitive consumerism. If consumer spending has long been a means through which to establish social prestige, this

²¹ The SP, established in 1972, has its roots in Maoism and the Dutch Communist movement. In 1991, under the leadership of Jan Marijnissen, it shifted to a more open, left social-democratic stance. A distinguishing feature has been its ‘activism’: it established (and continues to finance) its own health-care service and ‘environmental alarm team’ and, more than any other party, mobilizes extra-parliamentary campaigns on behalf of the poor and working classes.

²² Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom*, London [1942] 2002, p. 102.

process has intensified during the 1990s, aided perhaps by the increasing commercialization of television. It is often focused around the home, a hugely symbolic investment for the new generation of house owners created by the marketization and privatization of the past decades. The more frightened one feels, the more these feelings may need to be compensated by the sense of social position that depends on one's consumer spending. The results are a vicious spiral of insecurity, aspiration, increased spending, deteriorating family finances and increased household indebtedness.²³

Another avenue can be chauvinism: a close identification with a particular culture, religion or ethnic group may be a significant source of prestige and contribute to an ersatz sense of self. The phenomenon has been widely noted in sport, where a supporter will feel personally proud if their team performs well. It is possible to derive a comparable sense of self-importance from a nationalist pride that allows one to bask in the superiority of one's culture, language, *cuisine*, sports team, currency—which can, in given circumstances, result in an aggressive assertion of cultural, religious or racial superiority.

A third escape route from the sense of powerlessness inflicted by the apparently impersonal processes of globalization is the glorification of competitive success. To do well or forge ahead economically allows one to cover up one's feeling of anxiety, profiting from one's power over one's peers. This is clearly one reason why employees 'voluntarily' engage in such fierce competition for promotion, step up their work pace and work hours of overtime, passively submitting to the directives—however insane—of macho management. Others may accept their failure in this field and submit to the market system, experienced as a force of overwhelming power. They may accept the inherent inequalities and unpredictability that it brings, and seek avenues of escape elsewhere.

The more inevitable submission to the market appears, the more drastic—at a psychological level—such an identification will be. It hardly needs to be pointed out that globalization—the virtually worldwide spread of neoliberal capitalism, after its Cold War victory—combined with the dizzying intensification of commercialism in the media and

²³ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, New York 1967; Juliet Schor, *The Overspent American. Upscaling, Downshifting and the New Consumer*, New York 1998.

everyday life, have enormously strengthened the popular sense that, for the current generation at least, there is no alternative.

An understanding of the need for such psycho-social escape mechanisms may help to resolve the apparent contradiction between the growing sense of economic insecurity experienced by the majority of the electorate as a result of the neoliberal programme, and their continuing support for parties which advocate just such policies. As a temporary antidote to a sense of powerlessness and insecurity, one may welcome any new political leader or ideology that offers the hope or excitement of a strategy that will bring security or meaning to one's life. Fortuyn played to this, consistently projecting the image of a man who would make things better for 'ordinary' people by cutting down bureaucracy, clamping down on crime and reinforcing 'Dutch' culture against alien influences.

From Fortuyn to Bos

The Balkenende government that emerged from the May 2002 election remained in office for just 87 days—the shortest-lived Dutch administration since the Second World War. Tensions within the leaderless LPF escalated, within months, to public fisticuffs, leading to the government's resignation on 16 October 2002. With shares plummeting and a recession looming, a caretaker administration was installed, under the same CDA prime minister. Expectations that, with the 'historical aberration' of the LPF now safely out of the way, Dutch politics would return to business as usual proved misplaced, however—and ignored the structural causes underlying Fortuyn's rise. The tendencies that he brought to the surface—of an electorate seeking escape from the insecurity and atomization of the neoliberal order through the excitement and 'emancipation' from government promised by a charismatic leader—endure. As parties geared up for a new general election on 22 January 2003, it was clear that, if the LPF had imploded as a political force, Fortuyn's legacy lived on. Not only the VVD and CDA but the PvdA, too, took up his programme, parroting mantras of zero tolerance on crime and demands that immigrants 'must accept the country's norms and values'.

In other words, what we have been witnessing is a progressive *fortuynization* of Dutch political discourse, a parallel to the *lepenisation* of the French political sphere that Sebastian Budgen has described, in

which racist or anti-immigrationist positions once considered taboo become assimilated into the mainstream. The far-right outsider creates a populist frisson with his denunciation of the authorities for 'kowtowing' to immigrants, and is denounced by respectable liberal opinion; not too long afterwards, if in a more civilized register, the most well-regarded centre-left politicians take up the same cry.²⁴ The key figure here has been Wouter Bos, the 39-year-old ex-Royal Dutch Shell executive appointed, in November 2002, as head of the PvdA.²⁵ Bos ('stylish', 'charismatic and good-looking') had no trouble charming the *Financial Times*, to whom he explained that 'a lack of clarity over immigration and law and order' had cost the PvdA power in May. In the 2003 elections, however, these issues would lead off the party's manifesto: 'I am looking to Tony Blair on crime and on reform of the public sector', Bos explained, hymning his party's new 'tough but balanced' policies. His other model, Bos concedes, is Pim Fortuyn: 'I did learn a few things from him: style, courage, clarity. But mostly style'.²⁶

The January 2003 election campaign was thus dominated by Fortuyn's agenda—immigration, 'integration', crime and attacks on bureaucracy—with all the mainstream parties competing to win the LPF vote. Initially, the CDA and VVD clearly felt they had a good chance of dividing this between them in order to carry on the coalition of the right, given the punishment meted out by the electorate to the PvdA in May 2002. Early opinion polls indicated a left-right polarization, with the small Socialist Party at one stage predicted to garner up to 20 seats. Bos's embrace of the LPF agenda—contriving, as leader of a mainstream, centre-left party, to offer a more stable yet still glamorous version—swung the field for the PvdA. At the same time, he made enough gestures (reducing tax exemptions; waving the UN flag on Iraq) to keep the left vote onside. In the event, the majority of left-leaning voters succumbed to the evil of lesser-evilism—abandoning the SP and the Greens to vote PvdA in order to prevent another VVD–CDA coalition; while a sizeable proportion of ex-LPF supporters put their faith in him too. The result was a massive swing back to a now thoroughly fortuynized PvdA, which went from 23 to 42 seats, just two seats behind the CDA's 44.

²⁴ See Budgen, 'The French Fiasco', NLR 17, September–October 2002.

²⁵ In a parallel move, Wim Kok was appointed, three weeks after the January 2003 election, as a non-executive member of the board of Royal Dutch Shell.

²⁶ 'Dutch social democrats plot route back to power', *Financial Times*, 29 November 2002.

Talks are now on for a CDA–PvdA coalition government—the difference between the two mainly concerning the degree to which government spending should be cut.

One factor underlying the renaissance of the PvdA is undoubtedly the increasingly large share of floating voters, shifting between political parties with almost complete disregard for their programmes—which have, in the case of the major parties, become almost identical—and attracted mainly by the sense of a leader who, consciously or unconsciously, plays the role of the ‘winner’ or ‘hero’, promising relief from feelings of anxiety or powerlessness. In the January 2003 elections, the PvdA leader clearly played this role. But Bos should beware. If large sections of the populace, sensing themselves threatened by apparently impersonal political and economic forces beyond their control, should put their trust in any party that promises protection, order and meaning, they may reject it just as fervently once they discover that the fundamental causes of their suffering and anxiety have not been removed. On these grounds, the political process is likely to become more unstable, as well as more bigoted. The Netherlands remains—by international standards—a relatively tolerant country. But the space for positive human freedom afforded by real socio-economic security and equality is declining in Dutch society. This is our new embarrassment of riches.

REVIEWS

Peter Redfield, *Space in the Tropics: from Convicts to Rockets in French Guiana*

University of California Press: Berkeley 2000, \$24.95, paperback
345pp, 0 520 21985 6

SUSANNA HECHT

ON THE WILD COAST

From the other side of the border, French Guiana seemed a place of marvels. It was from there that coffee first came to Brazil, via a love affair between Francisco de Melo Palheta, a diplomat from Pará, and the glorious wife of the French Guyanese magistrate. The contraband was tucked into the charming bouquet that Palheta—sent to arbitrate various accidental problems of Dutch and French colonialism in the region—offered as a little *lembrança*, after the exchange of kisses; a miniature act of biopiracy involving the commodity that would define the Brazilian economy for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There was the chill of the penal colony on Devil's Island, where Dreyfus was imprisoned; later transformed into fantastic technicolour for Steve McQueen's escape across the water in *Papillon*. Yet French Guiana was not, officially, a colony but a *département* of France, just like Vosges or Provence, and could elect two deputies and a senator to the National Assembly.

This was in the 1980s, a time when the Brazilian Amazon was in a state of violence approaching that of civil war. The generals still ran the country; Indians and forest people leapt away from the juggernaut of development and crashing forests rather like grasshoppers fleeing a lawnmower. Rainforest was hacked down, rivers ran with mercury, bloodshed was everywhere. In French Guiana they seemed to have skipped all this; there, they were launching telecommunication satellites. While the militaries and local *caciques* were signing off on corrupt land deals, the French Guyanese were contracting

physicists and engineers. Their publicity pamphlets hymned the 'stylish towns'—not the usual fetid assemblages of Amazon urbanism, concrete block houses and wattle-and-daub shacks, linked to the outback by roads either choked with dust or greasy with mud. Guyanese students, 'devoted to physics and mathematics', were recruited to high-tech jobs at the space centre.

It was all very far from the malarially fraught and militarized frontier that most Amazonian youth had to face; it seemed that French Guiana inhabited a kind of parallel universe. Sleek Ariane missiles lifted into the sky, the product of a harmonious public-private partnership to advance communications—or at least, those in Europe. In the rest of the Amazon, the radio gabbled its 'message minutes', reporting one domestic tragedy after another between lilting *nordestino* tunes—'João, your mother is very very ill, please come home at once'. This was as good as local communication got. There were intimations that, somewhere, these worlds intersected—the Nixdorf computer assembly in Redencao; the talk of wireless telephones. Meanwhile, with elegant regularity, more than half the world's commercial satellites blasted out from the remote Guyanese edge of the Rainforest.

Peter Redfield's aim, in this wide-ranging and imaginative book, is to bring together the nineteenth-century penal colony and the twentieth-century space centre, to consider colonization and technology—within this 'northeast corner of South America, where a vast array of trees meets a slow and placid quadrant of the Atlantic'—in a double focus. The operation of two 'grand plans'—'key elements of different historical moments of a world system, here glossed as "Empire" and "Globe"'—comes into view. Redfield guides us through the multiple dimensions of what seems at first to be a kind of Guyanese exceptionalism, but which ends up as something more dauntingly universal. His project embraces both theoretical complexity and an increasingly surreal landscape and history. If this is the anthropology of globalism, it indulges in none of the jargon that has come to characterize so much of the discipline's post-colonial literature. His volume integrates some of the key themes of contemporary anthropology: colonial history, globalization, science and technology. While these elements also inscribe space and place elsewhere, French Guiana is a locale where the vista is a lot clearer; this is a historical ethnography of an enclave.

Redfield frames his narrative within the moment of three powerful *mythos*, though he avoids the standard metaphors of Lost Eden—El Dorado that have characterized other recent attempts—Slater's *Entangled Edens*, for example—to understand the foundational ideologies of Amazonia. Instead, Redfield begins with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, that seminal *mission civilisatrice* in which the castaway dictates the political terms of the island and the technical forms of its settlement. As Redfield points out, Crusoe's island is both a kingdom and a prison, Guiana's destiny in the nineteenth century.

Crusoe does not remain an explorer but becomes a colonist—a condition that separates him from earlier travellers, adventurers or merchants, Odysseus or Sinbad. The island, too, has a specific location: it is set in the Caribbean, 'raw entryway to the New World', between Trinidad and the mouth of the Orinoco. Crusoe has in fact sailed past the 'long, flat expanse of the Guianas' on his voyage, blown off course from his Brazilian plantation. In this setting, where 'political economy and morality weave together', Crusoe turns the master-slave dialectic on its head. Here it is the master who works, taming the empty land of settler myth with his salvaged chest of tools, improvising practical solutions to the problems posed by nature. Redfield sees in Crusoe the emergence of a key figure for modernization: the mobile man, a displaced agent who carries with him the technical knowledge to transform his surroundings. Crusoe's heirs—figures 'cast in the role of agents of change', who 'expressly lack unquestioned attachment to their surroundings'—are central to his study. The development of the island, the 'land of displacement', is seen as the assertion of mobile cultural forces over a fixed locale.

While their hinterlands lead down into Brazil and Venezuela, all three Guianas—British (now Guyana; independent since 1966), Dutch (now Suriname; independent since 1975) and French—represent an exception to South American normality. They share a legacy of non-Iberian European colonization, and remained colonies long after the rest of the continent won political independence. Often they have been classified as part of an expanded Caribbean, a practice Redfield follows here. Each, too, has played a relatively marginal role within their respective colonial empires. France secured its foothold on the Wild Coast only in 1676, having fought off the English and Dutch—the northern European powers vying to take advantage of Spanish and Portuguese neglect. Yet French Guiana, as Redfield explains, continued to languish at the edge of its colonial empire, out of the loop of the sugar boom and the Caribbean plantation economy. The harbour at Cayenne was ill-suited to the slavers' ships, and the prevailing winds were unfavourable. Worse, the undrained, low-lying ground proved swampy and malarial. A concerted attempt at settlement after the loss of Canada in 1763 foundered amid widespread epidemics. Lack of labour and low-level development reinforced each other in a cycle of inertia, while preserving 'an open horizon for future dreams'.

The second framing narrative that Redfield deploys is that of Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*. Beneath the burning sun of some forgotten outpost, a voyager is shown the extraordinary apparatus that carries out executions by continuously engraving the condemned man's sentence into his body until he dies. The traveller witnesses the final, mad demise of the system, its officers and its exaggerated principles—'a nightmare of reason gone astray in some distant tropics'. It was the British who had first explored the ingenious double solution to the problems of social pressures at home

and labour shortages in the colonies through the deportation of convicts. By 1826, French frigates were plying the lands between the Oyapock and Maroni rivers, searching for the New World's Botany Bay—although a range of possible holding sites, from the Marquesas to Texas, were under review. The revolutionary year of 1848 proved the turning point. The workers' uprising that June resulted in over 12,000 political prisoners, crowding the old Mediterranean *bagnes*—the naval prisons, whose inmates had once been chained to their galley-oars. Louis-Napoleon's *coup d'état* created another 27,000 detainees. The emperor-to-be argued persuasively that punishment by hard labour would be 'more efficient, more moralizing, less expensive and more human' if it were used to advance the noble aims of French colonization. The abolition of slavery in 1848 had removed one central objection to a penal colony—the damage to the creed of racial authority if white men were seen in chains, doing manual labour. The *bagnes* closed, one by one, and their inmates were transported to the tropics.

The first shipment of convicts arrived in 1852, disembarking initially at a trio of tiny islands off the coast: St Joseph's, Royale and Devil's Island. The cargo was composed of common criminals, political prisoners and problematic priests—counterparts to the God, Gold and Glory that had animated earlier New World conquests. Like moles, blinking in the glare of tropical light, they emerged from the gloomy holds to gain their redemption through labour. For many, it came instead through tropical disease—some 20 per cent of the inmates died in the first year. The French authorities experimented repeatedly with different sites and acclimatization procedures, meticulously recording and comparing death rates. In 1859, the first batch of thirty-six women prisoners were imported, in hopes of fostering the growth of convict families that might populate Guiana along Australian lines. Nearly a third of them died in the first six months.

The theme and practice of the 'natural prison' would gain ground throughout Amazonia by the end of the nineteenth century. The great Euclides da Cunha wrote of the Amazon rubber boom as a form of incarceration. Tappers, imprisoned by the forest and by debt, served out their sentence through the rubber trails that inscribed the impenetrable structures of their solitary confinement. More formal and less metaphorical visions of the penal colony are described in Llosa's *The Green House*. Convict settlements graced the great Amazon interior across Peru, Colombia and Bolivia, the vast tropical isolation providing a more formidable barrier than iron bars. Japanese incarceration camps found their way into central Pará during World War Two. The whole region was seen as a vast penitentiary, in which unending toil and unlimited distance were the parameters of control.

Guyanese death rates and reports of poor administration—the colony would have seventy-eight governors in seventy-seven years—made unsettling

reading for metropolitan proponents of the moral and economic benefits of convict labour. Like the fantastic machine in Kafka's story, Redfield argues, the French penal colony had lost its claim to the very reason that had produced it, becoming an impure, inefficient instrument of torture and elimination. From the mid-1860s New Caledonia was promoted as a more salutary alternative, for white prisoners at least; it was here that the bulk of the Communard prisoners were dispatched after 1871. Yet by the 1880s the Pacific island was seen as 'too luxurious' by the Freemasons and other law-and-order factions of the Third Republic, and Atlantic transportations resumed. It was within this context that Devil's Island was considered the most appropriate place of incarceration for Captain Alfred Dreyfus, convicted in 1894 of spying for Imperial Germany. By this stage the larger convict settlements were at Kourou, the capital Cayenne, St Laurent and the other two islets—hence Dreyfus's status as the sole prisoner on Devil's Island, in a hut specially built for him, surrounded by a double stockade. It was here that he spent the four years of his confinement before his second trial, writing the 'wild, raving letters'—'the climate alone is enough to set fire to the brain!—that the Duchesse de Guermantes would gently deplore. By the 1920s, the place had given birth to a literary sub-genre of its own—*Horrors of Cayenne, Hell's Outpost, Isle of the Damned*. It was not until after the Second World War that French Guiana would finally be 'neutralized' through DDT spraying, political incorporation into the motherland as a Département d'Outre-Mer and, in 1946, the final closure of the penal colony.

Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* provides Redfield's third narrative lens. Written in 1865, the former stockbroker's prescient tale envisions US artillery masters, at a loose end after the Civil War, redirecting their talents towards the moon. It foresees a Florida launch site, an ocean landing and much store set on public relations, military expertise and human cargo. (Another option discussed by Verne's protagonists at the Baltimore Gun Club was that of blasting the earth itself to render its axis vertical, producing a world without seasons.) France's rocket programme, though vastly overshadowed by the Cold War space race, was also intimately linked to military and imperialist aspirations. In 1962, Algerian independence forced the French Army to seek an alternative to its Saharan test-site at Hammaguir. Once again, functionaries scanned the globe for a suitable location.

French Guiana met all the requirements: political stability, an open eastward horizon over the ocean—permitting a flight path in the direction of the earth's rotation—and proximity to the equator. Satellites can only orbit the centre of another body and, since the earth spins, an orbit at any angle other than directly above the middle plane of rotation would not stay constant relative to the ground below. Geostationary orbit was crucial for the chain of communications satellites which—circling the globe

at 17,000 mph, some 22,000 miles out from the planet's midriff—would famously transform contemporary social and economic life with their high-speed, long-distance telecom facilities. Financed by military budgets and international corporations, they would also dynamize the commercial space market of the mid-1980s. Observation satellites, by contrast, speeding low over the earth in polar orbits, and capable of monitoring spots at the same local time each day, required a launch site with an open horizon towards the north or south. The Centre Spatial Guyanais—construction had started at Kourou in 1965—was ideally placed. Redfield describes the night-time launch of an Ariane: 'a flare, then a flash of light as bright clouds billow' and slowly, ponderously, the sleek white rocket rises, far in the distance, wavers for a moment, then gathers momentum and vanishes over the ocean, powering its burden, a Japanese satellite, away from the earth. He writes acutely, too, of the highly stratified urban geography of Kourou, which descends in social status as it falls away from the sea. The luxury shoreside villas of the CSG directors and their deputies give way to the 'executive' area and Italianate town centre; bordered, in turn, by the Calypso quarter—some three hundred chalets, built for CSG engineers, lying among the ubiquitous Chinese corner shops. From there, the lower-income, semi-skilled, mixed-race suburb stretches away to the south and west, until the high-rise flats of the creole manual workers appear. Beyond these stand the concrete blocks of the *cité stade*, housing those relocated by CSG development; the maroon village, rows of rudimentary shacks built around an old waterpipe by Samarakas and Bonis; and the huts of the Kalifia Indians.

The penal colony and the space centre have played comparable roles as state projects, moulding the environmental and metaphorical realities of French Guiana while hollowing out the region's natural economy. Each has created its own administrative hierarchy, staffed by the modern Crusoes of technical expertise, and carved out its own territory within the larger political entity; each has become a 'symbolic nexus' within the Metropolitan imagination. Yet as the two come into double focus, Redfield delineates a series of differences between the 'imperial' and 'global' moments. He examines the nineteenth-century challenges to 'biological cosmopolitanism'—arguments that drew, in part, on French Guyanese death rates to substantiate their claim that man 'cannot change his latitude and climate with impunity'. Redfield considers them in the context of today's 'new tropics', whose heat, humidity and threat of disease have been neutralized by sanitation, refrigeration and mosquito control, dark glasses, vaccination and air conditioning—to create the 'warm climes of tourism and retirement'.

Attitudes to nature are equally changed: the fierce jungle that menaced the nineteenth-century convicts has been replaced by a fragile, threatened biodiversity, ambiguously protected by a new 'environmental cosmopolitanism'.

Within the world of work, though, Redfield sees more in the way of continuities: the reality of the penal system was not redemption through labour, but the hope, perhaps, of survival, of getting by on the strength of small pleasures found in the midst of oppression. Colonization, which involved importing tools and methods designed elsewhere, left a gap between the system and the locale that was open to negotiation, *bricolage*, making do. Similarly, in the new space of Kourou—where international consortia, communication networks, corporate finance and a technical framework that is planetary in scope define the meaning of development—there are, for every technocrat, a dozen *bricoleurs*, adjusting and making do in the interstitial spaces of the tropics. Here, rather than resistance, we find a space of action between the official structure, on the one hand, and everyone else: a place of moments to be seized, the 'latitudes of accommodation'. This is a world of improvisation in the midst of grander plans—pharaonic projects of dams, roads, cities of industry, whose necessary counterpart seems to be the shanties of indolence where, somehow, so much of the real work gets done. It is this tradition of improvisation and *bricolage* that forms the real historical link between the failed penal colony and the successful space centre. These tropics look more familiar; the glistening rockets also seem less strange.

Inevitably, in a work of this scope, some questions will go unanswered. Redfield defines 'globalism' in technological terms, and writes lyrically of the transformations wrought by the space age:

Although the airplane opened up the sky, and the radio tower filled the air with waves . . . neither made the limits of the Earth entirely visible or transparent. Space technology closed the sky again, bounded it from above and sealed it whole. Only then could the sky become fully modern in an active, technological sense, and only then could what lay beyond it become meaningful as space, a vast sea of darkness surrounding a blue and green point of human place. At last the world was one.

He pays less attention, perhaps, to the political and economic dimensions of globalism—so that the continuing colonial status of French Guiana as a DOM, for example, is scarcely questioned. In reality, as Redfield partly attests, rule from Paris has been quite strongly contested. The independence movement of the early 1970s, though brutally suppressed, left its traces. Columbus Day, 1992, saw the start of a week of rioting and general strikes against French domination. Yet this aspect of Guianan experience is given little conceptual weight.

Do Redfield's persuasive arguments for including the Crusoes in anthropology's remit involve scanting the Fridays here? The 'metropolitans' who are his central focus make up 8 per cent of the overall population of French Guiana—something under 200,000 in total (though this figure excludes

large numbers of illegal Brazilian immigrants), for an area the size of Maine, or a sixth that of France. Of the official population, creoles—the descendants of Africans, from Guiana and elsewhere in the Caribbean, and Europeans—make up the largest block, of around 48 per cent, while Haitians compose another 22 per cent. 'Maroons'—descendants of the African slaves who escaped, largely from the plantations of Dutch Guiana, to found independent communities in the interior between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries—constitute a further 6 per cent; these include the Aluku, Saramaka, Ndjuka and Paramaka. Amerindians—Arawaks, Emerillons, Palikurs, Wayanas, Wayampis and Kalifas, by far the most numerous—total roughly 4 per cent. The Chinese community, mainly small shopkeepers, make up another 1 per cent; as do the Indochinese Hmong people, resettled in French Guiana in the wake of the Vietnam War.

To pose this another way: if, for Redfield, the global frontier lies upwards, in outer space, for many Guyanese it seems to be southwards, opening up to Brazil and the rest of Latin America—and away from France. Redfield cites a fascinating TV debate between a Creole road contractor and a metropolitan representative of the World Wildlife Fund, over the construction of a road going south from Cayenne towards the Brazilian border. The WWF, the contractor points out, had not protested against a ring road for the space centre, nor the construction of a hydro-electric dam to power the satellite launches and air-conditioning at Kourou. The southern highway would represent 0.001 per cent of French Guiana's forest: 'We need roads, need to redistribute the population, need to have links with our neighbours, with Brazil, even to Venezuela, to end this artificial tie with France'.

These days, the colonization of the tropics—monitored by Raytheon spy satellites calculating the rates of clearing and the movement of cocaine through the vast equatorial forest—takes place not so much in the margins as in the 'space between'. The dynamics that shape social life have grown more complex, the power relations that underlie them more ambiguous. The environment, along with the *bricoleurs*, increasingly fractures the standard analytics about development and its meanings, providing a 'proliferation of impure categories'. As Redfield puts it: 'Storms of progress blow, but the angels of history no longer fly in a single line'. The conceptual horizons remain open at the end of this striking, eloquent work.

Daniel Buren, *Mot à mot*
 Centre Pompidou/ Éditions Xavier Barral/ Éditions de La Martinière:
 Paris 2002, €75, hardback
 496pp, 2 7324 2902 3

SVEN LÖTTICKEN

STRIPES, NO STARS

In the late sixties, *Artforum* and other specialist magazines began increasingly to publish 'installation shots' of artworks that showed not only the piece itself but the exhibition area within which it was located. Minimalist works by artists such as Robert Morris, Donald Judd and Dan Flavin—neither paintings nor traditional sculptures on pedestals, but structures that shared a space with the viewer—could hardly be depicted otherwise; especially in the case of Flavin's neon light pieces, where the work transformed the perception of the surrounding environment. The 'installation shot' led to a new use of the term 'installation', which came to refer not merely to any work of art located in a gallery but to a new form: installation art. Artists such as Marcel Broodthaers and Hans Haacke gave this practice a political turn. Installation art became an investigation of the art context not merely in a spatial sense, but also in an institutional one. In brief: the Minimalist phenomenological investigation of space gave way to a post-Minimalist critique of institutions and power structures.

Daniel Buren's early work also participated in this shift but, in contrast to most post-Minimalist installation art, Buren's practice is rooted in painting. In the late sixties, he reduced his formal vocabulary to equally spaced stripes, 8.7 centimetres wide. There would always be an alternation of white and coloured stripes, with only a single colour employed in any one striped plane. Such an approach was part of a wider rebellion in sixties' art against traditional painterly values: in a 1967 manifesto, Buren and three colleagues declared that they were no longer painters, as 'painting is to apply (consciously or not) rules of composition'. Buren's stripes soon travelled from canvas to less traditional media such as posters, the walls of exhibition spaces and printed matter. Unlike modernist painters such as Barnett

Newman, with his 'zips', Buren used his 'zero sign' as something with no intrinsic value. Rather, its worth derives from the ways in which it points to and acts in its surroundings—as in the '*affichages sauvages*', posters Buren glued onto advertising hoardings in Paris and other cities in 1968 and the years that followed. While the evenly spaced stripes were obviously not compatible with the commercial imagery normally seen there, they might have appeared to be mere formalist gestures compared to the more overt political engagement of other posters of the time. However, Buren's *affichages* were a very precise way of questioning advanced art's ambiguous public status. He took his stripes outside the usual art-world media—galleries, magazines—to create a situation where they were all but invisible to unwitting viewers; one had to be informed about Buren's work and its location in order to notice it *as art*. Buren thus emphasized art's reliance upon its official context, even if the piece appears to exist 'outside'. Not unlike Robert Smithson with his site/non-site works, Buren set up a dialectic between various non-art sites and art media. A work may exist in 'public space', but it only becomes public as a work of art, as opposed to a gratuitous physical object, through its inclusion in the media of the art world.

One can find the *affichages sauvages* under the letter 'A' in Daniel Buren's voluminous *Mot à mot*, published on the occasion of his recent exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, *Le Musée qui n'existait pas*. The book somewhat resembles a massive Filofax, complete with alphabetical dividers. Under each letter—only K, W and X are missing—there are one or more headings, with accompanying images and texts—press cuttings, letters and extracts from previous writings by Buren. Thus, under 'M': MANIFESTATION / MASQUER / MIROIR / MONUMENT / MOUVEMENT / MUR / MUSÉE. The resulting documentation of his career, though not in chronological order, is not as arbitrary as the alphabetical principle might suggest. The material under 'CENTRIFUGE/CENTRIPÈTE', for example, essentially continues the previous section, 'CENSURE'. Here Buren documents one of the most notorious results of the politicization of art in the early seventies. For a group show in the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne, Haacke had made a piece consisting of a reproduction of a still life by Manet, with texts detailing the history of the work and of the people involved with it: once owned by the Jewish German painter Max Liebermann, the painting, viewers learnt, had been acquired in 1968 by the Wallraf-Richartz-Kuratorium, chaired by Hermann J. Abs, a powerful banker in postwar West Germany whose services had been vital to the Third Reich's war economy. When the Wallraf-Richartz authorities prevented Haacke from exhibiting this work, Buren pinned up reproductions of the piece against a background of his characteristic stripes, accompanied by a text with the heading, *Kunst bleibt Politik*. In a *Nacht- und Nebelaktion*, the

museum's directorate then pasted white sheets of paper over the reproductions of Haacke's work.

Another case of censorship, in the 'CENTRIFUGE/CENTRIPÈTE' section of Buren's book, involves a tackier instance of art-world politics. For the Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition in 1971, Buren hung a huge drapery with green stripes in the enormous spiralling interior of the Guggenheim; this was to be complemented by a blue banner across the street outside. Once again, Buren was exploring the dependence of art in 'public spaces' on art media such as the museum. But some American artists whose works were shown on Frank Lloyd Wright's spiral ramp felt upstaged by the French 'decorator', and the Guggenheim curators had the green-striped fabric taken away. The whole affair is documented in *Mot à mot* with various texts, including a letter from Flavin to Buren, which ends with the words: 'Also, be assured that somehow, I simply don't want to spare the effort to dislike you.' The new interest in the art context, while drawing greater critical attention to the ideological underpinnings of the institutions, also led to a situation in which such squabbles were deemed worthy of documentation.

In work like Haacke's early seventies' pieces one can see a sociologization of art: artists became interested in the workings of the art world, in its power structures and how these are shaped by economic and political leverage. Buren's *Mot à mot* is an outcome of this process, documenting not just his work but his trajectory through the sphere of artistic networks and institutions. In the eighties, the sociologization of art and art discourse was mirrored by sociology's turn towards art; a tendency that culminated, in the nineties, with works such as Pierre Bourdieu's *Les Règles de l'art* (1992), Niklas Luhmann's *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft* (1995) and Nathalie Heinich's *Le triple jeu de l'art contemporain: sociologie des arts plastiques* (1999)—not to mention scores of lesser contributions. In 1994 Bourdieu also published a series of dialogues with Haacke entitled *Libre-échange* (published in English as *Free Exchange* a year later), in which he displays an affinity with the artist's critical sociological practice.

Shortly before his death, Bourdieu agreed to make a contribution to Buren's Centre Pompidou exhibition, for which he planned a kind of sociological installation that would document the critical reception of Buren's work, using video, texts and other media. 'If I had the time', he had remarked in 1993, 'instead of just saying in the abstract, "the art world is a field", I would video a gallery during a private view, with the artist's commentary, and afterwards analyse everything that flows from the logic of the field.' Bourdieu died before the Centre Pompidou project could be realized, but his notes for it are included in *Mot à mot*; altogether they take up nine pages, under the heading 'COMPRENDRE'. Here Bourdieu criticizes the use of sociology 'as an absolute weapon against contemporary art', through

a form of 'sociological populism' that invokes the widespread rejection of such works to condemn both contemporary artistic practice and the use of public funds to support it. In contrast to this, Bourdieu wanted to posit himself as a 'sociologist *in situ*'—echoing Buren's description of his site-specific practices—applying a form of sociology that would be literally situated, and legitimated, artistically.

How would this work? Buren constructed an immense installation on the sixth floor of the Centre Pompidou, consisting of a grid of square cubicles, each some 5 x 5 metres; one of these was to have been occupied by Bourdieu's sociological presentation. As his final notes for the project—broken off on 20 January 2002, just three days before his death—make clear, Bourdieu proposed a model of different kinds of 'beholders', occupying three distinct levels, whose statements would be displayed around the walls of the cubicle. The first of these represents the *vox populi*; the second, the 'level of art critics'; and the third is the 'reflexive level'. Bourdieu provides a list of quotations for all three. Although he states that the *vox populi* here stands for 'the so-called cultivated audience', many of the comments about contemporary art (Buren's in this case) assembled under this rubric make little pretense of culture—'this is not art', 'this is just intended to shock', etcetera; many of these remarks were recorded on the *cour* of the Palais Royal, redesigned by Buren in the eighties. Section two contains, of course, statements by art critics, but also one from Nathalie Heinich. The reflexive level, by contrast, contains quotations only from Bourdieu himself—apart from one by Baudelaire. Texts by the different 'beholders' were to be spoken by an actor, who would be filmed and shown in a projection on one wall of the room; the others, each a different colour, would be occupied by printed texts of the various beholders' responses. On the ceiling, Bourdieu planned to have a painting by Jackson Pollock, chosen by Buren, alongside one by the Icelandic painter, Erró, entitled *The Background of Pollock* (1967), in which canonical works of Western art loom over Pollock's free-floating head. The Erró would show, Bourdieu explained,

that one could not 'understand' a Pollock (or any other contemporary work of art) unless, as *sine qua non*, one has in one's head what the artist had in his head—or his hand, or his eye: that is to say, the whole history of art, and thus the totality of pictorial possibilities, past and present.

It is thus popular exclusion from the degree of art-historical knowledge required to understand contemporary art that Bourdieu identifies at the root of public rejections of much current artistic practice—rather than the work's intrinsic elitism, as claimed by sociological populists.

It is clear that Bourdieu felt contemporary art to be under attack from a combination of crude populism and more directly political tendencies. His

fears are in part borne out by the pronouncements of figures such as Jean Clair, director of the Musée Picasso and powerful art-world player—cited by Bourdieu in the category of Beholder 2—who has voiced opinions close to those of the Front National, on the one hand glorifying ‘the French tradition’ and art with ties to ‘the land’, and on the other lambasting internationalism and experimental art. Another example of the same trend came in November last year when Ami Barak, respected director of the Languedoc-Roussillon contemporary art fund, FRAC, was sacked by the regional administration. His internationalism, and refusal to give a right-wing populist slant to the FRAC’s programme, was not appreciated by the FN representatives. But to focus on such elements is to portray contemporary art as a besieged enclave, when it is in reality a core component of a thriving culture industry—if not an industry all of its own.

Bourdieu classifies as Beholder 1.3 someone who denounces Buren as an ‘*artiste officiel*’—his success and official recognition serving as a pretext for populists to denounce him for membership of the elite. But the very fact that such criticism is possible surely demonstrates that Buren’s position now is very different from what it was in 1968. Bourdieu has precious little to say about Buren’s actual career, or about the transformation of the art world and its audience, or audiences, over the past few decades. Instead he chooses to paint a somewhat antiquated picture of the artist as lone avant-garde hero, who has to be defended by a reflexive, artistically authorized sociologist against attacks from all sides.

Bourdieu takes up arms against a form of sociology that treats art as an alien sphere, and prides itself on its ability to pierce through the pretences of contemporary artistic practice, exposing it as an ‘imposture’ perpetrated by a small elite. But does Bourdieu himself identify so closely with Buren’s position that he fails to develop a reflexive attitude towards it? When treating with works of art within any discipline, such an attitude must entail both a full involvement in the sphere of art and art discourse, and an awareness of its limitations. One needs to be deeply engaged with an artist’s work, but also able to step back and place it in contexts other than that of the artist’s intentions. Bourdieu’s best writing does precisely that, especially from a historical perspective: his analysis of Flaubert’s *L’Éducation sentimentale* in *Les Règles de l’art* is an obvious example. But in this case, it seems as though, in his desire to counter sociological populism by becoming a sociologist *in situ*, Bourdieu has ended by becoming a hostage of his partiality for Buren.

How might we view Buren’s trajectory within the art world of the past three decades? The Centre Pompidou exhibition also saw the renewed installation of a piece from 1977, specially made for the then brand-new mega-museum. *Les Couleurs: sculptures* consists of Buren’s stripes attached to various Parisian roofs, which one can try to pick out from the museum

with binoculars installed at strategic points. Like Smithson's 'site/non-site' pieces, this work now feels like a farewell of sorts to the neo-avant-garde's hopes of leaving the art world behind and merging into real life. Standing in the transparent funnel of one of the Pompidou's staircases, gazing over the city, one realizes that, instead of this fusion, what took place in the eighties and nineties was the colonization of cities by art-turned-spectacle: shows such as *Chambres d'amis* in Ghent or *Skulptur* in Münster created a traveling circus, in which the skills of artists and curators were applied to 'city marketing'. Buren's contribution to *Chambres d'amis* was to stripe part of the spare bedroom in the house of an art-collecting couple, which could be visited during the show; and to reconstruct this room in the museum, where he striped the section of the wall left bare in the real bedroom. This is a precise and elegant work, but it indicates the ease with which Buren's dialectic of art and non-art spaces has been turned to the purposes of cultural tourism, effortlessly absorbed by artistic spectacle.

What has made Buren's work particularly suited to the art-world-turned-culture-industry of the past two decades is its visual sophistication and optical attractiveness. It is telling that, in a text on the Cologne affair, he states that he introduced Haacke's rejected piece by means of a work of his own 'which had been fortunate enough to *please* the exhibition's patrons'. Buren knew that his work possessed this quality, whereas Haacke's certainly did not; but he then consciously sabotaged this ability to please. In general, his work has become progressively more alluring; in spite of his early manifesto, Buren has remained a painter in his eye for colour and composition—his stripes may be a 'non-composition' in themselves, but they form one when they are installed. His work has been criticized for its decorative aspect, but his reply—which can be found in *Mot à mot* under the heading '*décoratif*'—is that virtually no important work of the twentieth century forgoes this quality. Buren has in fact sought a direct dialogue with Matisse who, more than other modernists, embraced the decorative. In 1995 the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris permanently installed some of Buren's early canvases—*Murs de peintures* (1966–77)—in two ensembles that complement Matisse's *The Dance*. As art in the late sixties and early seventies became more focused on the context, and as the context became part of the art, art effectively became less a process of formal composition than a decorative project for a specific site—much like many of Matisse's works. Buren's pieces are often more aggressive than traditional decoration, and it is this that makes them suitable for the world of artistic spectacle. During the last two decades, the stripe motif has increasingly been supplemented by the use of mirrors, coloured planes, various materials and more complex spatial arrangements. If decoration traditionally aims to embellish a place in a pleasant way, the

spectacular transformation of a space turns it from an agreeable living or working environment into an attraction in its own right.

The cubicles of Buren's Centre Pompidou show were alternately empty and modified in some way by his sophisticated tools—one room used mirrored walls to create the illusion of infinite space; in others, coloured spotlights, striped planes, translucent coloured materials and even sound were employed. Bourdieu's presentation would have been surrounded by what amounts to an inventory of effects, an almost didactic analysis of the ways in which exhibition spaces can be spectacularly transformed. Such work would risk being cynical manipulation if it did not have this systematic quality, if it did not foreground the means of manipulation. Buren's exploration of art-turned-spectacle, with its emphasis on creating 'experiences', proceeds via spectacular means; but he makes the tricks of today's mega-shows transparent with what can only be described as playful rigour—rather than overwhelming the viewer, he reveals the workings of his effects, and in the process stimulates an analytical attitude towards them. It is true that his work is more visually pleasing than ever, and hardly constitutes a frontal assault on contemporary exhibition practice—or anything else, for that matter. But since Buren's artistic practice is contextual, he must work in and with the given context, rather than retreating into some sphere of alleged purity.

Efraín Kristal, *Invisible Work: Borges and Translation*
 Vanderbilt University Press: Nashville 2002, \$24.95, paperback
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MICHAEL WOOD

TREASONOUS CREATIONS

Translation as a daily, difficult practice often looks like a story of repeated failures, but we should be clear about the sort of failure we have in mind. First, it cannot be absolute or final: many words, images and modes are persuasively translated all the time. Second, even when force or connotation is lost in the passage from one language to another, something may be gained, a glimpse of new meaning, or a resonance in the very gap between idioms. And third, our standard of success cannot be the perfect transmission of all aspects of a text or speech. This would not be a translation at all but an unimaginable replica, rather like the map of an empire in a Borges story which turns out to be as big as the empire itself. *Traduttore traditore*, the Italian proverb eagerly says. But the translator is not a traitor, only the orchestrator of a second, different form of life. Or not necessarily a traitor. Treason is possible, even frequent, but not all departures from the original are treasonous.

At the other end of the scale of our received ideas translation appears as a large, loose figure of speech, a synecdoche for reading itself, or for intertextuality, or even for literature. 'In the end all literature is translation', writes Novalis, cited by Efraín Kristal. In the end, maybe, but meanwhile there are still distinctions to be made, and although Borges adduces the idea of translation within a single language, thereby diffusing the meaning of the term considerably, he still separates what he calls 'direct writing' from 'imitation'. Translation, he says, helps us to understand the 'modest mystery' of literature because it tackles 'a visible text', and different versions of that text 'are a partial and precious documentation of the changes the text suffers' [translated by Eliot Weinberger, in Jorge Luis Borges, *Selected Non-Fictions*, New York, 1999, p. 69]. Borges literally writes of the 'vicissitudes'

the text suffers, which suggests that translation is a form of trouble as well as a second life. Borges would not, I think, resist the idea that literature itself is a form of trouble; but he would not say it was only that.

Translation is the 'invisible work' of Kristal's title, and he seeks to situate Borges's writing between its specific and metaphorical applications, between the daily practice and the figure of speech—translation is the 'process whereby a writer remodels one sequence of words into another'. 'I see translation', Kristal writes, 'as more central to Borges's literature than the celebrated labyrinths, mirrors, tigers, and encyclopedias that abound in his literary world'. An appealing argument, but the subject remains slippery, and this admirable book develops a curious and instructive stutter in its opening pages, defining its 'purpose' in four different ways. 'The purpose of this book is to demonstrate that translation . . . is central to Borges's reflections on writing and to his contribution to literature'; 'The purpose of this book is to make visible Borges's creativity as translator'; 'The main purpose of this book is to offer an account of the role translation played in Borges's creative process'; 'My purpose is to underscore the significance of translation in Borges's oeuvre'.

All of these purposes are accomplished to varying degrees, and Kristal's hesitation is understandable, since he has at least three distinct avatars of Borges on his hands: the Borges who thought and wrote about translation; the Borges who translated; and—most interesting and most elusive—the Borges who folded ideas about translation into almost all of his fiction. Kristal devotes separate sections to each of these three figures, and argues, in an afterword, that the complexities of translation should displace those of philosophy in the critical account of the energy driving his work—we must understand Borges's deep games with philosophy but not mistake him for a philosopher; nor, on the other hand, do we have to accept all his ironies as ultimately sceptical. The role of translation offers Kristal a bridge between the two positions: Borges thinks in versions to avoid any commitment either to first causes or their absence.

The first named purpose (to discuss the centrality of translation in Borges's work) is the clearest and most fully achieved; the last (regarding its significance to his oeuvre) looks like a rephrasing of the first, but invites us to wonder where the oeuvre begins and ends. The second purpose is also accomplished, though the result is more disappointing: Borges translated important and interesting writers—Woolf, Faulkner, Emerson, Carlyle, Poe, Stevenson, Kafka, Gide, among many others—into Spanish, and his first published work, printed in a Buenos Aires newspaper in 1910, was a rendering of Oscar Wilde's 'The Happy Prince', written, according to his mother, when Borges was nine.

He 'felt proud', according to Kristal, 'that his first publication was a translation', and liked to introduce himself as a translator. But this seems to

have been a mask rather than a profession; and the actual run of Borges's work in that line appears to be tuned to the perceived needs of Argentinian culture rather than to any writerly programme. He is credited, among other things, with bringing German Expressionism 'to the attention of the Spanish-speaking world'; he also translated from English, French, Italian, Anglo-Saxon and even Old Norse (the *Prose Edda*), which he learned as his eyesight faded in the 1950s. Not that ignorance of a language barred him from rendering it in Spanish: he became fascinated by Chinese literature, and translated fragments from collations of English and German versions. Some of these works were composed in the dark basement of the Municipal Library, where he escaped the 'solid unhappiness' of his 'menial and dismal existence' as a First Assistant Librarian, a job he took on shortly before his father died to lighten their dependence on his mother's fortune.

Borges's creativity as a translator does come across in Kristal's account, though it seems rather slight on the whole, effectively limited to a few switches and interpolations. Kristal makes heavy weather claiming importance for these moves, and he himself finally backs down. 'Borges's most radical engagements with an original', he says, 'did not take place in his translations, even in the most daring of them'; and in another context he tells us why:

One can translate within the same language, and one can copy from one language to another. Borges would call a text a 'copy' if the most pertinent observations to be made about it could also be made of the original. In contrast, a 'version' is a text with relevant differences with respect to either the original or another translation of the same work . . . A 're-creation' . . . omits many details to conserve the emphasis of the work, and it may add interpolations.

Although Kristal wants us to see Borges as a re-creator, he was in most of his translations a copyist. His fiction is another matter, and if we do not quite see his 'creative process' at work—Kristal's third purpose—we do see what that unlovely phrase is getting at: the role of translation not as a figure for literature but as a model of complex human interaction.

At the end of the story 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', for example, what looked like an entertaining fantasy turns into historical desolation. The world has been invaded by a ruthless system of unreality—Borges lists Nazism, Anti-Semitism and Dialectical Materialism as its equivalent—and the narrator dedicates himself to what he calls 'an indecisive Quevedian translation' of Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial*, which he does not intend to publish. The 'indecision' of the narrator's translation is a direct answer to the emphatic certainty of the ruling system; and the unpublished text is an instance of the invisible work that remains when the visible world has gone

wrong. Kristal cites Christopher Maurer, who identified a strain of Quevedo (the 17th century Spanish satirist) in Borges's late verse as the source of his 'stoic calm' at the prospect of oblivion.

But there is more. Along with his friend Bioy Casares (who makes an appearance as a character in the story), Borges himself translated a section of *Urn Burial*, which excised references to Christianity and shifted 'a meditation on the stoic values rewarded in the afterlife' to a 'quiet protest in the face of obliteration'. He also made an interesting interpolation about the burial of facts in silence.

Many more facts have been buried in silence than registered, and the most copious volumes are but epitomes of what has taken place. The chronicle of time began with the night, and obscurity still serves it; some facts never see the light; many have been declared; many more have been devoured by the obscurity and the caverns of oblivion.

'There is no better commentary' on 'Tlón, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', Kristal says; and there seems to be more than stoicism at work. By filtering the voice of a fictional Browne through a pastiche of Quevedo, the narrator evokes a use of literature which is not merely mimetic or playful, or submissive to a world rapidly actualizing the Nietzschean saying that there are no facts, only interpretations. Although Nietzsche, as it happens, did not quite say that. He said he would say it. 'Against positivism, which insists on the phenomenon that there are only facts, I would say: no, facts are just what there are not, there are only interpretations'. Of course, the world of Tlón is rigorously idealist; in it, there are no facts, only phenomena. But the two conditions look alike, flourish in the same hedgerow. The task of translation grows between them, where what is lost or obscured, may also be preserved and retrieved; where fact and phenomenon continually translate into each other and remain at play.

Kristal quotes Borges's discreetly unfaithful version of a sentence by Kipling—not quite a copy and not yet a re-creation. Kipling writes 'I had just discovered the entire principle upon which our half-memory falsely called imagination is based'. Only a half-memory, and 'imagination' is the wrong name for it. Borges writes, 'In that instant I had discovered the principles of the imperfect memory which is called imagination'. The imagination is a form of memory, imperfect because it is human, but loyal to what has happened, however elusive that may be. In this idiom, to imagine the past is not to invent it but to find it, and the past itself begins to resemble a frequently translated text.

Thinking of Borges's views on translation, as distinct from his uses of it in fiction, Kristal suggests that 'it would be possible to construe an approach, even a doctrine, on the basis of his general observations'. More than an

approach, I think, and less than a doctrine. The difficulty with Borges's pronouncements, on translation or on anything else, is their infallible mischief. This is also their charm, of course; and more than their charm, part of their meaning. But then paraphrase becomes clumsy, because so much depends on what is not being said. The great virtue of Kristal's book is that he never loses hope or track, and he makes the consistency of Borges's views on translation, as well as their shifting complexity, very clear. But even he misses a few swerves, and following Kristal's hints, it may be worth looking more closely at Borges's quiet irony, not to pin it down but to trace its movements.

The various translations of a single text, Borges says, are 'different perspectives on a mobile fact', a lottery of what is left out and what is underlined ('*un largo sorteo de omisiones y de énfasis*'). He goes on to make his most frequently quoted remark on translation—he himself printed it, Kristal tells us, on at least three separate occasions. 'To presuppose that every recombination of elements is necessarily inferior to its original is to presuppose that draft nine is necessarily inferior to draft H—for there can only be drafts. The concept of the "definitive text" corresponds only to religion or exhaustion' [translated by Eliot Weinberger, in *Selected Non-Fictions*, p. 69, slightly modified]. Borges then writes of the 'superstition of the inferiority of translations—coined in the well-known Italian adage', but he does not mean translations cannot be bad, only that they do not have to be. By the same token originals do not have to be good, and one of Borges's funniest jokes in this domain is his suggestion that an original can be unfaithful to its translation. Even so, Borges is proposing a mischievous model of reading rather than sheer relativity or recklessness. 'There can only be drafts' means we should, as readers, treat all texts as works in progress—assuming there is both work and progress. The 'definitive text', similarly, is a function of our needs rather than the work itself. The mobile fact will keep moving until we stop it by dogma, or become too tired to follow its movements. But it is a fact, not a fantasy or the free-form invention of the reader.

The above quotations come from the splendid essay 'The Homeric Versions', but there is more delicate and ironic detail in 'The Translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*', which Kristal calls 'Borges's most sustained and boldest essay on translation'. Borges starts out by invoking the concept of 'translating against', as if translation were always (or often) an attempt to erase the anxiety of influence induced by past translations. 'We must understand this hostile dynasty', Borges says. 'Lane translated against Galland; Burton against Lane' [translated by Esther Allen, *Selected Non-Fictions*, p. 92]. Each seeks to 'annihilate' his predecessor. We might think the translated text gets a little lost in the process, and Borges does think so. He also thinks that losing a famous text in translation may be a way

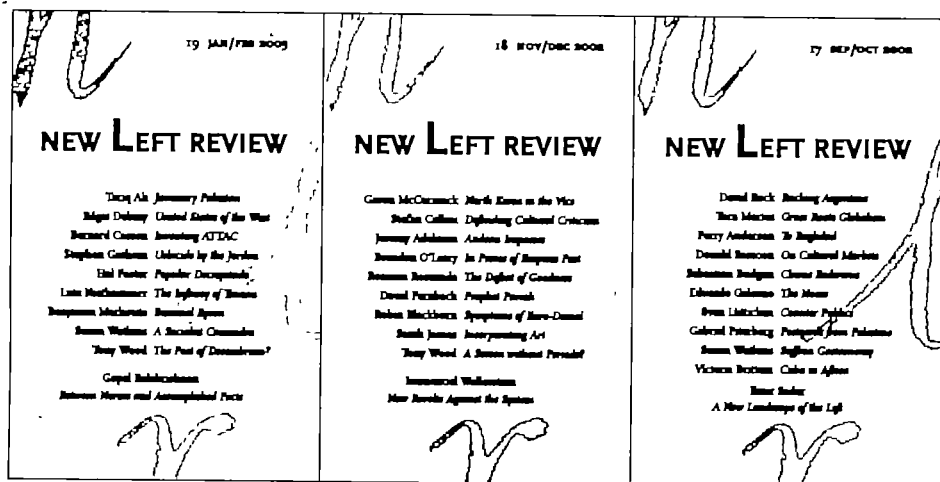
of finding it has entered another literature. The virtue of these battling translations is that they 'can only be conceived of in the wake of a literature. Whatever their blemishes or merits, these characteristic works presuppose a rich (prior) process'. But the initial text does not disappear, and Borges has no hesitation in speaking of the 'falsification' of Burton and others.

He is most subtle and amusing, though, on the work of J. C. Mardrus—called Madrus throughout Kristal's book—who published a 1906 translation of the Arabian Nights, which drew Borges's suspicion by its very subtitle: '*Traduction littérale et complète du texte arabe*'. Borges, it turns out, admires this work but chiefly for its 'happy and creative infidelity'. Or does he admire it? Mardrus 'translates luxuriantly', Borges says; 'strives to complete the work'; makes 'personal contributions'—where the word for 'contributions' is '*obsequios*', gifts or hand-outs. 'In general', Borges says, 'Mardrus does not translate the book's words but its scenes: a freedom denied to translators, but tolerated in illustrators, who are allowed to add these kinds of details'. 'Mardrus never ceases to wonder at the poverty of "oriental colour" of *The Thousand and One Nights*', and 'with a stamina worthy of Cecil B. de Mille, he heaps on the viziers, the kisses, the palm trees and the moons'. Borges declares that of course he is not attacking Mardrus for these divagations; or rather, to be more precise, he says that he would be sorry—'not for Mardrus, for myself'—if we were to read in his remarks a '*propósito policial*', nicely translated by Esther Allen [*Selected Non-Fictions*, p. 106] as 'constabulary intent'. His aim, Borges says, is not to demolish but to document the widespread admiration for Mardrus's version. But one can be suspicious without being a policeman, and it is hard not to see here, beneath the acknowledgement of the charms of Orientalism, an attachment to the stricter idea of the less adorned East.

What Borges is offering, I take it, and what makes his argument so hard to fix or summarize, is an oblique but devastating attack on the ideas both of creativity and of fidelity. Creativity is fine, he implies, if you do not care about the difference between the author of Exodus and Cecil B. de Mille. Fidelity is good if you do not mind being a yawn-inspiring pedant. In all translations, case by case, there will be chances for creative choice, and fidelity does not have to be dull, but the simple embrace of either of these abstractions will put a stop to the only activity that matters, the proliferating and potentially endless talk among texts. When Borges, writing of Mardrus, uses the stealthy phrase 'feigns to translate', '*finge traducir*', he unmistakably implies the reverse, a translation that would be the real thing. But the real thing would be multifarious, and nobody said it was easy.

Michael Wood teaches English and comparative literature at Princeton. *The Road to Delphi: Scenes from the History of Oracles* will be published later this year.

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EDITORIAL

Re-Colonizing Iraq

TARIQ ALI



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TARIQ ALI

Editorial

RE-COLONIZING IRAQ

ON 15 FEBRUARY 2003, over eight million people marched on the streets of five continents against a war that had not yet begun. This first truly global mobilization—unprecedented in size, scope or scale—sought to head off the occupation of Iraq being plotted in the Pentagon. The turnout in Western Europe broke all records: three million in Rome, two million in Spain, a million and a half in London, half a million in Berlin, over a hundred thousand in Paris, Brussels and Athens. In Istanbul, where the local authorities vetoed a protest march in the name of ‘national security’, the peace movement called a press conference to denounce the ban—to which ten thousand ‘journalists’ turned up. In the United States there were mass demonstrations in New York, San Francisco, Chicago and LA and smaller assemblies in virtually every state capital: over a million people in all. Another half a million marched in Canada. The antipodean wing of the movement assembled 500,000 in Sydney and 250,000 in Melbourne.

On 21 March, as British and American forces headed across the Iraqi border, the long quiescent Arab street, inspired by these global protests, came to life with spontaneous mass demonstrations in Cairo, Sanaa and Amman. In Egypt, the mercenary regime of Hosni Mubarak panicked and arrested over 800 people, some of whom were viciously maltreated in prison. In the Yemen, over 30,000 people marched against the war; a sizeable contingent made for the US Embassy and had to be stopped with bullets. Two people were killed and scores injured. In the Israeli-American protectorate of Jordan, the monarchy had already crushed a virtual uprising in a border town and now proceeded to brutalize demonstrators in the capital. In the Arab world the tone of the streets was

defiantly nationalist—‘Where is *our* army?’ cried Cairene protesters. In Pakistan the religious parties took full advantage of the pro-US stance of the Muslim League and PPP to dominate antiwar mobilizations in Peshawar and Karachi. Islamists in Kenya and Nigeria did the same, though with more effect: the American embassies in both countries had to be evacuated. In Indonesia, over 200,000 people of every political hue marched through Jakarta.

Less than a century ago, over eight million votes had been cast for the European Social Democratic parties of the Second International, inspiring the only previous attempt at co-ordinated action to prevent a war. In November 1912 an emergency conference of the International was convened beneath the Gothic arches of the old Cathedral in Basle, in an effort to avert the looming catastrophe of the First World War. As the delegates entered they were treated to a rendering of Bach’s Mass in B Minor, which marked the high point of the gathering. The Socialist leaders, German, British, French, pledged to resist each and every aggressive policy of their respective governments. It was agreed that, when the time came, their parliamentary deputies would vote against war credits. Keir Hardie’s call for an ‘international revolutionary strike against the war’ was applauded, though not put to the vote. Jean Jaurès was loudly cheered when he pointed out ‘how much smaller a sacrifice a revolution would involve, when compared to the war they are preparing’. Victor Adler then read the resolution, which was unanimously approved. It concluded: ‘Let the capitalist world of exploitation and mass murder be confronted by the proletarian world of peace and international brotherhood.’

By August 1914 these worthy sentiments had crumbled before the trumpet blast of nationalism. The programmatic clarity displayed at Basle evaporated as the tocsin rallied the citizens of each state for war. No credits were refused; no strike was called or revolution fomented. Amid a growing storm of chauvinist hysteria, Jaurès was assassinated by a pro-war fanatic. While a brave, bedraggled minority gathered unnoticed in the Swiss town of Zimmerwald to call for the imperialist war to be turned ‘into a civil war, against reaction at home’, the majority of Social Democratic leaders stood stiffly to attention as their supporters donned their respective colours and proceeded to slaughter each other. Over ten million perished on the battlefields of Europe to defend their respective capitalisms, in a conflict that saw a new Great Power make its entrance

on the world stage. A century later, the United States of America had seen off virtually every rival to become the lead—often, the solo—actor in every international drama.

The eight million and more who marched this year were not mobilized by any International, nor did they share a common programmatic outlook. From many different political and social backgrounds, they were united only by the desire to prevent the imperialist invasion of an oil-rich Arab country in a region already riven by a colonial war in Palestine. Instinctively, most of those who marched did so because they rejected the official justifications for the bloodshed. It is difficult for those who accept these as 'plausible' to understand the depth of resistance they provoked and the hatred felt by so many young people for their propagators. Outside the United States, few believe that the fiercely secular Ba'ath Party of Iraq has any links with al-Qaeda. As for 'weapons of mass destruction', the only nuclear stockpile in the region is situated in Israel; and, as Condoleezza Rice herself had pointed out in the final year of the Clinton administration, even if Saddam Hussein had such an arsenal, he would be unable to deploy it: 'If they do acquire WMD, their weapons will be unusable because any attempt to use them will bring national obliteration'.¹ Unusable in 2000; but three years later Saddam had to be removed by the despatch of a massive Anglo-American expeditionary force and the cluster-bombing of Iraq's cities, before he got them? The pretext not only failed to convince but served rather to fuel a broad-based opposition as millions now saw the greatest threat to peace coming, not from the depleted armouries of decaying dictatorships, but from the rotten heart of the American empire and its satrapies, Israel and Britain. It is awareness of these realities that has begun to radicalize a new generation.

The imperial offensive

The Republican Administration has utilized the national trauma of 9.11 to pursue an audacious imperial agenda, of which the occupation of Iraq promises to be only the first step. The programme it seeks to implement was first publicized in 1997 under the rubric, 'Project for the New American Century'. Its signatories included Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Jeb Bush, Zalmay Khalilzad, Elliott Abrams

¹ 'Promoting the National Interest', *Foreign Affairs*, Jan–Feb 2000.

and Dan Quayle, as well as such intellectual adornments as Francis Fukuyama, Midge Decter, Lewis Libby and Norman Podhoretz. The American Empire could not afford to be complacent with the end of the Cold War, they argued: 'We seem to have forgotten the essential elements of the Reagan Administration's success: a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States' global responsibilities.' The language of this coterie, compared with the euphemisms of the Clinton era, is commendably direct: to preserve us hegemony, force will be used wherever and whenever necessary. European hand-wringing leaves it unmoved.

The 2001 assault on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon was thus a gift from heaven for the Administration. The next day, a meeting of the National Security Council discussed whether to attack Iraq or Afghanistan, selecting the latter only after considerable debate. A year later, the aims outlined in the 'Project' were smoothly transferred to the 'National Security Strategy of the United States of America', issued by Bush in September 2002. The expedition to Baghdad was planned as the first flexing of the new stance.³ Twelve years of UN blockade and Anglo-American bombing had failed to destroy the Ba'ath regime or displace its leader. There could be no better demonstration of the shift to a more offensive imperial strategy than to make an example of it now. If no single reason explains the targeting of Iraq, there is little mystery about the range of calculations behind it. Economically, Iraq possesses the second largest reserves of cheap oil in the world; Baghdad's decision in 2000 to invoice its exports in euros rather than dollars risked imitation by Chávez in Venezuela and the Iranian mullahs. Privatization of the Iraqi wells under US control would help to weaken OPEC. Strategically, the existence of an independent Arab regime in Baghdad had always been an irritation to the Israeli military—even when Saddam was an ally of the West, the IDF supplied spare parts to Tehran during the Iran–Iraq war. With the installation of Republican zealots close to Likud in key positions in Washington, the elimination of a traditional adversary

³ In *The Right Man*, David Frum, Bush's former speechwriter, argues that 'An American-led overthrow of Saddam Hussein—and a replacement of the radical Ba'athist dictatorship with a new government more closely aligned to the United States—would put America more wholly in charge of the region than any power since the Ottomans, or maybe the Romans'.

became an attractive immediate goal for Jerusalem. Lastly, just as the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki had once been a pointed demonstration of American might to the Soviet Union, so today a blitzkrieg rolling swiftly across Iraq would serve to show the world at large, and perhaps states in the Far East—China, North Korea, even Japan—in particular, that if the chips are down, the United States has, in the last resort, the means to enforce its will.

The official pretext for the war, that it was vital to eliminate Iraq's fearsome weapons of mass destruction, was so flimsy that it had to be jettisoned as an embarrassment when even famously subservient UN inspectors—a corps openly penetrated by the CIA—were unable to find any trace of them, and were reduced to pleading for more time. This will not prevent their 'discovery' after the event, but few any longer attach much importance to this tattered scarecrow. The justification for invading Iraq has now shifted to the pressing need to introduce democracy to the country, dressing up aggression as liberation. Few in the Middle East, friends or foes of the Administration, are deceived. The peoples of the Arab world view Operation Iraqi Freedom as a grisly charade, a cover for an old-fashioned European-style colonial occupation, constructed like its predecessors on the most rickety of foundations—innumerable falsehoods, cupidity and imperial fantasies. The cynicism of current American claims to be bringing democracy to Iraq can be gauged from Colin Powell's remarks to a press briefing in 1992, when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Bush senior. This is what he had to say about the project that is ostensibly now under way:

Saddam Hussein is a terrible person, he is a threat to his own people. I think his people would be better off with a different leader, but there is this sort of romantic notion that if Saddam Hussein got hit by a bus tomorrow, some Jeffersonian democrat is waiting in the wings to hold popular elections [laughter]. You're going to get—guess what—probably another Saddam Hussein. It will take a little while for them to paint the pictures all over the walls again—[laughter]—but there should be no illusions about the nature of that country or its society. And the American people and all of the people who second-guess us now would have been outraged if we had gone on to Baghdad and we found ourselves in Baghdad with American soldiers patrolling the streets two years later still looking for Jefferson [laughter].³

³ Quoted by Robert Blecher, "Free People Will Set the Course of History": Intellectuals, Democracy and American Empire, Middle East Report Online, March 2003; www.merip.org

This time Powell will be making sure that Jeffersonian democrats are flown in with the air-conditioning and the rest of the supplies. He knows that they may have to be guarded night and day by squads of hired American goons, like the puppet Karzai in Kabul.

Old mastiffs and new satellites

On the one side, a vast popular outcry against the invasion of Iraq. On the other, a us administration coolly and openly resolved on it from the start. Between them, the governments of the rest of the world. How have they reacted? London, as could be expected, acted as a blood-shot adjutant to Washington throughout. Labour imperialism is a long tradition, and Blair had already shown in the Balkan War that he could behave more like a petty mastiff, snarling at the leash, than a mere poodle. Since Britain has been bombing Iraq continuously, wing-tip to wing-tip with America, for as long as New Labour has been in office, only the naive could be surprised at the dispatch of a third of the British army to the country's largest former colony in the Middle East; or the signature paltering of House of Commons 'rebels' of the stamp of Cook or Short, regretting the violence but wishing God speed to its perpetrators.

Berlusconi in Italy and Aznar in Spain—the two most right-wing governments in Europe—were fitting partners for Blair in rallying such lesser fry as Portugal and Denmark to the cause, while Simitis offered Greek facilities for us spy planes. The East European states, giving a new meaning to the term 'satellite', which they had previously so long enjoyed, fell as one into line behind Bush. The ex-communist parties in power in Poland, Hungary and Albania distinguished themselves in zeal to show their new fealty—Warsaw sending a contingent to fight in Iraq, Budapest providing the training-camps for Iraqi exiles, even little Tirana volunteering gallant non-combatants for the battlefield.

France and Germany, on the other hand, protested for months that they were utterly opposed to a us attack on Iraq. Schroeder had owed his narrow re-election to a pledge not to support a war on Baghdad, even were it authorized by the UN. Chirac, armed with a veto in the Security Council, was even more voluble with declarations that any unauthorized assault on the Ba'ath regime would never be accepted by France. Together, Paris and Berlin coaxed Moscow into expressing its disagreement too with American plans. Even Beijing emitted a few

cautious sounds of demurral. The Franco-German initiatives aroused tremendous excitement and consternation among diplomatic commentators. Here, surely, was an unprecedented rift in the Atlantic Alliance. What was to become of European unity, of NATO, of the 'international community' itself if such a disastrous split persisted? Could the very concept of the West survive? Such apprehensions were quickly to be allayed. No sooner were Tomahawk missiles lighting up the nocturnal skyline in Baghdad, and the first Iraqi civilians cut down by the Marines, than Chirac rushed to explain that France would assure smooth passage of us bombers across its airspace (as it had not done, under his own Premiership, when Reagan attacked Libya), and wished 'swift success' to American arms in Iraq. Germany's cadaver-green Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer announced that his government too sincerely hoped for the 'rapid collapse' of resistance to the Anglo-American attack. Putin, not to be outdone, explained to his compatriots that 'for economic and political reasons', Russia could only desire a decisive victory of the United States in Iraq. The parties of the Second International themselves could not have behaved more honourably.

Farther afield, the scene was very similar. In Japan, Koizumi was quicker off the mark than his European counterparts in announcing full support for the Anglo-American aggression, and promising largesse from the beleaguered Japanese tax-payer to help fund the occupation. The new President of South Korea, Roh Moo-hyun, elected with high hopes from the country's youth as an independent radical, disgraced himself instantly by offering not only approval of America's war in the Middle East, but troops to fight it, in the infamous tradition of the dictator Park Chung Hee in the Vietnam War. If this is to be the new Seoul, Pyongyang would do well to step up its military preparations against any repetition of the same adventure in the Korean peninsula. In Latin America, the pr regime in Brazil confined itself to mumbling a few mealy-mouthed reservations, while in Chile the Socialist President Ricardo Lagos—spineless even by the standards of sub-equatorial social democracy—frantically cabled his Ambassador to the UN, who had irresponsibly let slip the word 'condemn' in chatting with some journalists, to issue an immediate official correction: Chile did not condemn, it merely 'regretted' the Anglo-American invasion.

In the Middle East, the landscape of hypocrisy and collusion is more familiar. But, amidst the overwhelming opposition of Arab public

opinion, no client regime failed to do its duty to the paymaster general. In Egypt Mubarak gave free passage to the us Navy through the Canal and airspace to the USAF, while his police were clubbing and arresting hundreds of protesters. The Saudi monarchy invited cruise missiles to arc over their territory, and us command centres to operate as normal from their soil. The Gulf States have long become virtual military annexes of Washington. Jordan, which managed to stay more or less neutral in the first Gulf War, this time eagerly supplied bases for American special forces to maraud across the border. The Iranian mullahs, as oppressive at home as they are stupid abroad, collaborated with CIA operations Afghan-style. The Arab League surpassed itself as a collective expression of ignominy, announcing its opposition to the war even as a majority of members were participating in it. This is an organization capable of calling the Kaaba black while spraying it red, white and blue.

The reality of the 'international community'—read: American global hegemony—has never been so clearly displayed as in this dismal panorama. Against such a background of general connivance and betrayal, the few—very few—acts of genuine resistance stand out. The only elected body that actually attempted to stop the war was the Turkish parliament. The newly elected AKP regime performed no better than its counterparts elsewhere, cravenly bargaining for larger bribes to let Turkey be used as a platform for a us land attack on Northern Iraq. But mass pressures, reflexes of national pride or pangs of conscience prompted large enough numbers of its own party to revolt and block this transaction, disrupting the Pentagon's plans. The Ankara government hastened to open airspace for us missiles and paratroop drops instead, but the action of the Turkish parliament—defying its own government, not to speak of the United States—altered the course of the war; unlike the costless Euro-gestures that evaporated into thin air when fighting began. In Indonesia, Megawati pointedly drew attention to the Emperor's clothes by calling for an emergency meeting of the Security Council to condemn the Anglo-American expedition. Naturally, after months of huffing and puffing from Paris, Berlin and elsewhere about the sanctity of UN authority, the response was complete silence. In Malaysia, Mahathir—not for the first time breaking a diplomatic taboo—bluntly demanded the resignation of Kofi Annan for his role as a dumb-waiter for American aggression. These politicians understood better than others in the Third World that the American Empire was

using its huge military arsenal to teach the South a lesson in the North's power to intimidate and control it.

Quisling syndrome

The war on Iraq was planned along the lines set out by its predecessors in Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. It is clear that politicians and generals in Washington and London hoped that the Kosovo–Kabul model could essentially be repeated: massive aerial bombardment bringing the opponent to its knees without the necessity of much serious combat on the ground.⁴ In each of these cases there was no real resistance, once B-52s and daisy-cutters had done their work. But on hand to secure the right result were also indispensable ‘allies’ of the targeted regimes themselves. In the Balkans it was Yeltsin’s emissaries who talked Milošević into putting his head into the American noose by withdrawing his troops intact from their bunkers in Kosovo. In Afghanistan, it was Musharraf who ensured that the bulk of Taliban forces and their Pakistani ‘advisers’ melted away, once Operation Enduring Freedom began. In both countries, it was the external patron whom the local regimes had relied on for protection that pulled the rug from under them.

In Iraq, however, the Ba’ath dictatorship was always a tougher and more resilient structure. It had received varying diplomatic and military support from abroad at different stages of its career (including, of course, from the United States, as well as Russia), but had never been dependent on them. Confident, nevertheless, that its top command must be brittle and venal, Washington persistently tried to suborn Iraqi generals to turn their coats or, failing that, simply to assassinate Saddam himself. Once all such attempts—even at the eleventh hour—proved a fiasco, the Pentagon had no option but to launch a conventional land campaign. The economic and military strength of the American Empire was always such that, short of a rebellion at home or an Arab-wide intifada spreading the war throughout the region, it could be confident of pushing through a military occupation of Iraq. What it could not do was predict with any certainty the political upshot of such a massive act of force.

⁴ When Kanan Makiya was granted an audience in the Oval Office last January he flattered Bush by promising ‘that invading American troops would be greeted with “sweets and flowers”’. The reality turned out to be slightly different. See *New York Times*, 2 March 2003.

In the event, the Iraqi Army did not disintegrate at the first shot; there was little sign of widespread popular gratitude for the invasion but rather more of guerrilla resistance and—as civilian casualties from missiles, mortars and bombing raids mounted—of increasing anger in the Arab world. Temporarily, the Crusader armies succeeded in making Saddam Hussein a nationalist hero, his portraits flourished on demonstrations in Amman and Gaza, Cairo and Sanaa. At the time of writing, the hospitals of Baghdad are overflowing with the wounded and dying, as the city is prised apart by American tanks. 'We own it all', declares a US colonel, surveying the shattered capital in the spirit of any Panzer commander in 1940.⁵ Behind the armoured columns, the Pentagon has an occupation regime in waiting, headed by former US General Jay Garner, an arms dealer close to the Zionist lobby at home, with assorted quislings—fraudsters and mountebanks like Ahmed Chalabi and Kanan Makiya—in its baggage train. It will not be beyond the US authorities to confect what it can dub as a representative regime, with elections, an assembly and so on, while the 'transitional administration' will no doubt be funded by the sale of Iraqi assets. But any illusion that this will be a smooth or peaceable affair has already vanished. Heavy repression will be needed to deal, not merely with thousands of Ba'ath militants and loyalists, but with Iraqi patriotic sentiments of any kind; not to speak of the requirements for protecting collaborators from nationalist retribution.

Already the lack of any spontaneous welcome from Shi'ites and the fierce resistance of armed irregulars have prompted the theory that the Iraqis are a 'sick people' who will need protracted treatment before they can be entrusted with their own fate (if ever). Such was the line taken by the Blairite columnist David Aaronovitch in the *Observer*. Likewise, George Mellon in the *Wall Street Journal* warns: 'Iraq Won't Easily Recover From Saddam's Terror': 'after three decades of rule of the Arab equivalent of Murder Inc, Iraq is a very sick society'. To develop an 'orderly society' and re-energize (privatize) the economy will take time, he insists. On the front page of the *Sunday Times*, its reporter Mark Franchetti quoted an American NCO: "The Iraqis are a sick people and

⁵ Banner in the *Los Angeles Times*, 7 April 2003. Analogies with Hitler's blitzkrieg of 1940 are drawn without compunction by cheerleaders for the war. See Max Boot in the *Financial Times*, 2 April: 'The French fought hard in 1940—at first. But eventually the speed and ferocity of the German advance led to a total collapse. The same thing will happen in Iraq.' What took place in France after 1940 might give pause to these enthusiasts.

we are the chemotherapy", said Corporal Ryan Dupre. "I am starting to hate this country. Wait till I get hold of a friggin' Iraqi. No I won't get hold of one. I'll just kill him." The report—in Murdoch's flagship paper—goes on to describe how his unit killed not one but several Iraqi civilians later that day.⁶ No doubt the 'sick society' theory will acquire greater sophistication, but it is clear the pretexts are to hand for a mixture of Guantanamo and Gaza in these newly Occupied Territories.

United Nations of America

There will, of course, be pleas from the European governments for the UN to take over the conquests of American arms, which Blair, keener than Bush on unctuous verbiage, will second for reasons of his own. Much talk will be heard of humanitarian relief, the urgency of alleviating civilian suffering and the need for the international community to 'come together again'. So long as no real power is ceded to it, the us has everything to gain from an *ex post facto* blessing bestowed on its aggression by the UN, much as in Kosovo. The months of shadow-boxing in the Security Council—while, in the full knowledge of all parties, Washington readied the laborious logistics for attacking Iraq—cost it little. Once it had Resolution 1441 in its pocket, passed by a unanimous vote—including France, Russia and China, not to speak of Syria—the rest was décor. Even France's Ambassador to Washington, Jean-David Levitte, had urged the us not to go forward with the second resolution: 'Weeks before it was tabled I went to the State Department and the White House to say, "Don't do it . . . You don't need it".'⁷

It was, of course, sanctimony in London rather than bull-headedness in Washington that dragged the world through the farce of further 'authorization', without success. But Levitte's advice spotlights the real nature of the United Nations which, since the end of the Cold War, has been little more than a disposable instrument of American policy. The turning-point in this transformation was the dismissal of Boutros-Ghali as Secretary-General, despite a vote in his favour by every member of the Security Council save the us, for having dared to criticize Western concentration on Bosnia at the expense of far greater tragedies in Africa. Once Kofi Annan—the African Waldheim, rewarded for helping the

⁶ *Sunday Times*, 30 March 2003.

⁷ *Financial Times*, 26 March 2003.

Clinton Administration to deflect aid and attention from genocide in Rwanda—was installed instead, at Washington's behest, the organization was safely in American hands.

This does not mean it can be relied on to do the will of the us on every matter, as the failure of its efforts to secure a placebo for Blair made clear. There is no need for that. All that is necessary—and now unfailingly available—is that the UN either complies with the desires of the us, or rubber-stamps them after the event. The one thing it cannot do is condemn or obstruct them. The attack on Iraq, like the attack on Yugoslavia before it, is from one point of view a brazen violation of the UN Charter. But no member state of the Security Council dreamt of calling an emergency meeting about it, let alone moved a resolution condemning the war. In another sense, it would have been hypocrisy to do so, since the aggression unfolded logically enough from the whole vindictive framework of the UN blockade of Iraq since the Gulf War, which had already added further hundreds of thousands dead to the credit of the Security Council since its role in Rwanda, at American instructions.⁸ To appeal from the us to the authority of the UN is like expecting the butler to sack the master.

To point out these obvious truths is not to ignore the divisions that have arisen within the 'international community' over the war in Iraq. When the Clinton Administration decided to launch its attack on Yugoslavia, it could not secure authorization from the Security Council because Russia had cold feet; so it went ahead anyway through NATO, in the correct belief that Moscow would jump on board later, and the UN ratify the war once it was over. This time NATO itself was split, so could not be used as surrogate. But it would be unwise to assume the outcome will be very different.

This is the first occasion since the end of the Cold War when a disagreement between the inner core of the EU and the United States exploded into a public rift, was seen on television and helped polarize public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic. But only a short journalistic memory could forget that a still more dramatic dispute broke out during the Cold War itself, occasioned by the same kind of adventure

⁸ For this background to the war, see 'Throttling Iraq', editorial, NLR 5, September–October 2000.

in the same region. In 1956 a 'unilateralist' Anglo-French expedition, in collusion with Israel, attempted to effect regime change in Egypt—to the fury of the United States, which had not been consulted beforehand and feared the adventure might open the door to Communist influence in the Middle East. When the *ussr* threatened to use rockets to help Nasser, Eisenhower ordered Britain to pull out of Egypt on pain of severe economic punishment, and the Tripartite assault had to be abandoned. This time the roles have been largely reversed, with France and Germany expostulating at an American expedition, in which Britain—the perpetual attack-dog—has joined.

The difference, of course, is that now there is no Soviet Union to be considered in the calculus of aggression, and overwhelming power anyway rests with America, not Europe. But the lessons of 1956 have not lost their relevance. Sharp international disputes are perfectly compatible with basic unity of interests among the leading capitalist powers, which quickly reassert themselves. The failure of the Suez expedition prompted France to sign the Treaty of Rome establishing the *EEC*, conceived in part as a counterweight to the *us*. But the *us* itself supported the creation of the European Community, whose enlargement today serves its purposes, as the French elite is becoming uneasily aware—although far too late to do much about it. Ill-feeling is likely to linger between Washington and Paris or Berlin after the public friction of recent months, even if, as we are repeatedly assured, all sides will strive to put it behind them. Within the *EU* itself, Britain's role in backing the *us* against Germany and France, while pretending to play the go-between, has exposed it once again as the Trojan mule in the Community. But the days when De Gaulle could genuinely thwart America are long gone. Chirac and Blair will kiss and make up soon enough.

What is to be done?

If it is futile to look to the United Nations or Euroland, let alone Russia or China, for any serious obstacle to American designs in the Middle East, where should resistance start? First of all, naturally, in the region itself. There, it is to be hoped that the invaders of Iraq will eventually be harried out of the country by a growing national reaction to the occupation regime they install, and that their collaborators may meet the fate of Nuri Said before them. Sooner or later, the ring of corrupt and brutal tyrannies around Iraq will be broken. If there is one area where

the cliché that classical revolutions are a thing of the past is likely to be proved wrong, it is the Arab world. The day the Mubarak, Hashemite, Assad, Saudi and other dynasties are swept away by popular wrath, American—and Israeli—arrogance in the region will be over.

In the imperial homeland itself, meanwhile, opposition to the ruling system should take heart from the example of America's own past. In the closing years of the 19th century, Mark Twain, shocked by chauvinist reactions to the Boxer Rebellion in China and the us seizure of the Philippines, sounded the alarm. Imperialism, he declared, had to be opposed. In 1899 a mammoth assembly in Chicago established the American Anti-Imperialist League. Within two years its membership had grown to over half a million and included William James, W. E. B. DuBois, William Dean Howells and John Dewey. Today, when the United States is the only imperial power, the need is for a global Anti-Imperialist League. But it is the us component of such a front that would be crucial. The most effective resistance of all starts at home. The history of the rise and fall of Empires teaches us that it is when their own citizens finally lose faith in the virtue of infinite war and permanent occupations that the system enters into retreat.

The World Social Forum has, till now, concentrated on the power of multinational corporations and neoliberal institutions. But these have always rested on foundations of imperial force. Quite consistently, Friedrich von Hayek, the inspirer of the 'Washington Consensus', was a firm believer in wars to buttress the new system, advocating the bombing of Iran in 1979 and of Argentina in 1982. The World Social Forum should take up that challenge. Why should it not campaign for the shutting down of all American military bases and facilities abroad—that is, in the hundred plus countries where the us now stations troops, aircraft or supplies? What possible justification does this vast octopoid expanse have, other than the exercise of American power? The economic concerns of the Forum are in no contradiction with such an extension of its agenda. Economics, after all, is only a concentrated form of politics, and war a continuation of both by other means.

For the moment, we are surrounded with politicians and pundits, prelates and intellectuals, parading their consciences in print or the air-waves to explain how strongly they were opposed to the war, but now that it has been launched believe that the best way to demonstrate their love

for humanity is to call for a speedy victory by the United States, so that the Iraqis might be spared unnecessary suffering. Typically, such figures had no objection to the criminal sanctions regime, and its accompanying dose of weekly Anglo-American bombing raids, that heaped miseries on the Iraqi population for the preceding twelve years. The only merit of this sickening chorus is to make clear, by contrast, what real opposition to the conquest of Iraq involves.

The immediate tasks that face an anti-imperialist movement are support for Iraqi resistance to the Anglo-American occupation, and opposition to any and every scheme to get the UN into Iraq as retrospective cover for the invasion and after-sales service for Washington and London. Let the aggressors pay the costs of their own imperial ambitions. All attempts to dress up the re-colonization of Iraq as a new League of Nations Mandate, in the style of the 1920s, should be stripped away. Blair will be the leading mover in these, but he will have no shortage of European extras behind him. Underlying this obscene campaign, the beginnings of which are already visible on Murdoch's TV channels, the BBC and CNN, is the urgent desire to reunite the West. The vast bulk of official opinion in Europe, and a substantial chunk in the US, is desperate to begin the post-war 'healing process'. The only possible reply to what lies ahead is the motto heard in the streets of San Francisco this spring: 'Neither their war nor their peace'.

8 April 2003

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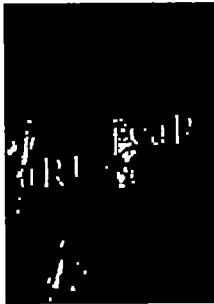


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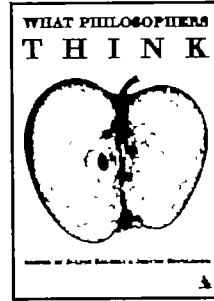


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PAUL GINSBORG

THE PATRIMONIAL AMBITIONS OF SILVIO B

MUCH OF LIBERAL European opinion—French and German, in particular—responded to Silvio Berlusconi's general election victory of 2001 with a chorus of unease. Do the method of his victory and the nature of his project herald a new and limited model of European democracy, the most ambitious of the many populist answers to the *malaises* of the Continent? And again, a question oft-repeated but which sounds historically ingenuous to many a sophisticated Italian ear: are there parallels between Italy's role as a precursor in the early 1920s and what is happening now? Primo Levi wrote, as long ago as 1974, that 'every age has its Fascism', and went on to warn that 'one can reach such a condition in many ways, not necessarily by means of terror and police intimidation, but also by withholding or manipulating information, by polluting the judicial system, by paralysing the school system'.²

Counterposed to any such interpretation is that of the great majority of Italian institutional and official opinion, which includes under its umbrella the rump of the Left Democrats (Democratici di sinistra), whose President is the former Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema. For them there is little danger of an incipient regime. *Il manifesto* continues to be sold freely from the newstands, the right of assembly has not been brought into question, RAI 3, even in the most unfree television system in Europe, continues to provide anti-Berlusconi satire and to broadcast news bulletins that are left-liberal in orientation. Italy, according to this view, is moving, if laboriously and melodramatically, away from proportional representation and weak government towards a necessary strengthening of the executive and a right-left alternation in power. If

anything, it is the present government's incompetence, not its concentration of power, that is putting Italy at risk. Michele Salvati wrote from the columns of *la Repubblica* a year ago: 'I have never thought, and I still don't, that this centre-right coalition constitutes "a menace to democracy", if that term is given its proper meaning'.³ It is worth asking whether he is right.

Berlusconian concepts

Perusing the two volumes of Berlusconi's speeches published before the last election, and covering the period 1994–2000, one is struck by how much space is dedicated therein to the concept of liberty and how little to that of democracy.⁴ The liberty that Berlusconi has in mind is prevalently 'negative', a classic freeing from interference or impediment. Individuals have to be placed in that condition of freedom which allows them, in an expression borrowed from the Risorgimento, to *fare da sé* or 'go it alone', to express their individuality to the full. Economy and society have likewise to be liberated, 'from oppressive chains, from the weight of bureaucracy and suffocating procedures, from fiscal pressure which has grown too fast and too far'. Competition increases such liberty: 'Everyone must be free to offer his own goods, services and ideas to his peers, who can decide freely if to accept or reject them. Every limitation to competition is equivalent to the violation of the freedom and rights of everyone.' All this will have a familiar ring to Anglo-American ears.⁵

'Positive' freedom, on the other hand, receives scant attention. In order to function, the market creates spontaneously a work ethic, as well as the moral principles of loyalty and honesty. It is these values which the political sphere lacks. The state, however much it tries, cannot legislate values into being. Rather it is to be regarded with suspicion every

³ See for example, Ignacio Ramonet, 'Berlusconi', *Le Monde diplomatique*, February 2002.

⁴ Article from *Corriere della Sera*, 8 May 1974, reprinted in Levi, *Opere*, vol. I, Turin 1997, p. 1187.

⁵ 'Berlusconi, il passato e le ingenuità colombe', *la Repubblica*, 12 December 2001.

⁶ *Discorsi per la democrazia* and *L'Italia che ho in mente*, Milan 2000. There is, of course, a great deal of political and intellectual posturing in these interventions, which often bear little relation to the actual practice of Forza Italia. This is particularly true of Berlusconi's prepared speeches to parliament (*Discorsi per la democrazia*).

⁷ See *Discorsi per la democrazia*, p. 22; *L'Italia che ho in mente*, p. 114.

time it seeks to do so, or to limit free competition in the name of the collectivity. Behind such intervention there always lurk 'the interests of certain groups and classes, whose electoral support is sought by those who hold power'. Anything other than a 'minimum state' is a potential threat to the person of the citizen: 'We cannot accept their desire to control everything, their invasion of our lives, their presumption to regulate all our activities!'⁶

As for democracy, when Berlusconi does pay some attention to it, his discourse is nearly always confined to the need for regular elections, and for the electorate to have the right to vote directly for single personalities—the president of the Council of Ministers; the presidents of the Regions; ideally, for the president of the Republic. His is a vision which concentrates on regularity and personality. The need to consult the electorate is stressed in particular in 1995, when the centre-right felt defrauded of the chance to test public opinion, which appeared to be on their side. What is never considered, and this should come as no surprise, is the wider communicative and cultural context in which elections occur, or the differing resources available to individual candidates. Likewise, scant attention is paid to the benign consequences of a balance of powers within the democratic state. Judicial autonomy is regarded as anathema.

Berlusconi's view of politics is thus based on the corrosive combination of negative freedom and formal, personalized democracy. The combination is corrosive because negative freedom, unaccompanied by its positive counterpart, undermines fatally the attempt to assert collective interests. It denies the possibility for a given community to establish, in the name of a collective good, a sense of limit and a necessary framework in which the search for self-realization can take place.⁷ It encourages instead the creation in civil society of over-powerful individuals unwilling

⁶ *L'Italia che ho in mente*, pp. 114–17, 201.

⁷ The classic text on negative and positive freedom is of course that of Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty' [1958], in *Four Essays on Liberty*, London 1969. The possibilities of authoritarianism implicit in positive freedom were always uppermost in Berlin's mind, perhaps exaggeratedly so; whereas it seems essential to insist, as Charles Taylor has done, that 'freedom resides at least in part in collective control over the common life': see his 'What's Wrong with Negative Liberty' in Alan Ryan, ed., *The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honour of Isaiah Berlin*, Oxford 1979, p. 175. For a recent and powerful revisiting of this debate, and the suggestion of a third concept of liberty as absence of dependence, see Quentin Skinner, 'A Third Concept of Liberty', in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 117, 2001 Lectures, Oxford 2003.

to submit to a much weakened general rule of law. They are free—too free, one might suggest—to *faire da sé*. At the same time, the rules of democracy, limited to the questions of regularity and personality, do nothing to guarantee a level and equitable terrain on which elections can be held. Few, if any, restrictions exist to impede new agents, emergent from the tertiary sector, and in particular from communications, finance and entertainment, from using their very considerable economic and mediatic resources to influence heavily, and sometimes to storm, the political sphere. The way is open for the creation of modern patrimonial and charismatic figures.

The historical realities of such a process are, at least so far, complicated and far from linear. Some of the great media entrepreneurs, including the most powerful of all, Rupert Murdoch, choose to wield political influence indirectly. They are distinctively patrimonial (Murdoch has ambitions for ownership and control which extend to all five continents), but rarely charismatic. The ill-fated Bernard Tapie in Marseilles and William Bloomberg in New York have both used local politics as a power base. Cem Uzan in Turkey, the founder of the country's first pay television, Star TV, has tried recently to assert himself on a national political level, but with limited success. Trajectories vary, as does the degree of political and legal constraint exercised upon these figures' freedom of action. They are most likely to make progress in those contexts, such as southern Europe and South America, where politics, even in their democratic form, have been dominated by deep-rooted patronage and clientelism.⁸ But as we shall see their rise to power and their influence is not limited to such settings.

The candidate

The electoral contest in Italy in 2001 can be read as an interesting case study of these processes at work in a complex and plural democracy of more than fifty years' standing. Silvio Berlusconi's campaign was fought with great opulence of means, which the lax Italian laws on electoral expenditure permit and even encourage. The illustrated booklet of 127 pages, entitled *Una storia italiana*, dedicated entirely to his entrepreneurial, sporting and political achievements, as well as to his idyllic

⁸ A fundamental treatment of this theme, covering the Balkans and Latin America, though not Italy, is N.P. Mouzelis, *Politics in the Semi-Periphery*, London 1986.

relations with family and friends ('Friendship, fidelity, loyalty, a taste for adventure, cheerfulness, intellectual curiosity: these are the characteristics of the "Berlusconi clan"'),⁹ was distributed to fifteen million Italian homes. Television statistics revealed Berlusconi's overwhelming presence on his own channels, and broad parity with the opposition on those of the RAI. To personalize the campaign Berlusconi insisted that his should be the only face on Forza Italia's hoardings. During the campaign it was thus possible to see this single, fixedly smiling face repeated thousands of times in the electoral bunting strung across the narrow streets of central Naples, or else the same face, enlarged beyond measure, staring solemnly downwards from the top of the pillars of a publicity temple erected in the atrium of Florence station. Such concentration of attention on a single figure was entirely new in the history of the Italian Republic.

Behind this charismatic presentation lay a good deal of substance. After the precocious fall of his first government in December 1994, when his coalition of right-wing forces had fallen apart after only six months in power, Berlusconi determinedly put to good use his ensuing years in the political wilderness. Above all he secured the economic bases of his empire. As a result of excessive and precipitate diversification, Fininvest had moved dangerously into debt after 1989. The company's precarious financial state, as well as the need to preserve its near monopoly of commercial television, were amongst the strongest motives that had driven Berlusconi into politics at the beginning of 1994. This was not the case seven years later. The reorganization and opening-up of Fininvest undertaken by Franco Tatò between 1993 and 1996, the successful quoting of Mediaset on the stock exchange, its continued dominance of commercial television thanks to the acquiescence of the centre-left government, the selling-off of the loss-making Standa supermarkets: all these moves ensured that Berlusconi entered the electoral arena in 2001 in a much strengthened position.¹⁰ He had become one of the richest men in Europe, with a patrimony estimated at around \$10 billion dollars.¹¹ This

⁹ *Una storia italiana*, Milan 2001, p. 38.

¹⁰ For details of the resurgent fortunes of Fininvest, see the useful M. Molteni, *Il gruppo Fininvest. Imprenditorialità, crescita, riassetto*, Turin 1998. For details of Mediaset, Berlusconi's media group, which was quoted on the stock exchange from July 1996 onwards, and of which Fininvest holds 48.2% of the shares, see www.gruppomediaset.it.

¹¹ www.forbes.com/finance/lists.

greatly increased wealth was the essential lubricant both of his own party and of the coalition which gathered under the name of the Casa delle Libertà, 'the House of Liberties'.

The solidity of Berlusconi's preparations manifested itself in other areas as well. By its new statute of January 1997, Forza Italia was reorganized into an effective machine for mobilizing electoral support, with a capillary presence covering the entire peninsula. By the end of the year 2000 it had more than 300,000 members.¹² In Europe, a patient strategy of gaining acceptance among the Christian Democrats was crowned with success in December 1999, with the entry of Forza Italia into the PPE; Helmut Kohl and José María Aznar showed little hesitation in accepting their twenty-five votes in the European parliament. At home, the links with Umberto Bossi's northern League were gradually reformed after the traumatic divisions of 1994. The tensions between Gianfranco Fini's post-Fascists, nationalist and favouring a strong central state, and Bossi's party, regionalist and even at heart secessionist, were effectively smoothed over.

Berlusconi's own programme was strong and simple: decrease taxation; streamline the state administration; provide public works for the southern un- and under-employed; establish greater security in the cities; stamp out illegal immigration and its high correlation with petty and not-so-petty crime; reform the judicial system and put an end to the prying and punitive actions of excessively independent magistrates.

Those in charge . . .

Facing him was the ruling centre-left coalition—uncertain, partially demoralized and profoundly disunited. The culture of the Olive Tree's reformism, with few exceptions, was derived from that of the Bank of Italy—liberal, rationalizing, watchful of the need to balance the books. These were important virtues in an Italian political sphere not noted for such qualities. But they were not enough. The centre-left had governed from above, with reforms, norms and regulations being announced to an essentially passive citizenship. Such a view of politics reflected the

¹² E. Poli, *Forza Italia. Strutture, leadership e radicamento territoriale*, Bologna 2001, table 8.3, pp. 250, 121 ff. The party's membership strongholds lie in the three northern regions of Lombardy, Piedmont and the Veneto; in Lazio; and in the southern regions of Puglia, Campania and Sicily.

pessimism of Massimo D'Alema, convinced of the natural irresponsibility of Italian society. There was no attempt to build support and involvement from below, to create a climate of enthusiasm which could have sustained some of the government's worthier initiatives. In more than one sphere, as with educational reform and the teachers, exactly the opposite happened. By 2001 the centre-left said that it had governed well, and in some areas it had; but in the country there was scarce enthusiasm for, or even knowledge of, what it had done.

At the same time it had showed no capacity to recognize the potential danger to democracy posed by the emergence of a figure such as Berlusconi. No law on the conflict of interests was passed during the five years of centre-left government. No reform of the Italian media system was undertaken. No strong line was taken on the incompatibility of Berlusconi's being simultaneously the leader of the opposition and under trial on a number of serious charges. Instead, a climate of opinion was created which favoured indulgence and procrastination, not only with regard to Berlusconi but also in key Mafia trials and those regarding Tangentopoli.¹³ Furthermore, the centre-left was unable to regain the level of electoral unity that had brought it narrow victory in 1996. Already in 1998 the fragile political truce had been sundered when Rifondazione Comunista brought down the popular government led by Romano Prodi. In 2001, the party of Antonio Di Pietro, the ex-magistrate 'hero of Tangentopoli', refused (or, according to him, 'was refused') an electoral accord. The 3.9 per cent of votes that his party garnered were thus squandered and, as a result, many marginal seats lost in the House of Deputies. Rifondazione Comunista, too, fought alone in the Senate elections, though not for the uninominal seats in the House of Deputies.

The centre-left thus entered the fray ill-humoured and programatically ill-equipped. Even so, Berlusconi's victory was far from overwhelming. In the competition for the uninominal seats in the House of Deputies (75 per cent of the total), the House of Liberties gained 45.4 per cent of the votes against the 43.8 per cent of the Olive Tree coalition. In the proportional competition (allotted the remaining 25 per cent of the seats), the distance between the two groupings was much wider—49.6 per cent

¹³ See the comments of the anti-Mafia magistrates Ginacarlo Caselli and Antonio Ingroia in their book *L'eredità scomoda*, Milan 2001, p. 175.

for the parties of the House of Liberties, 40.6 per cent for the Olive Tree plus Rifondazione Comunista. Voters were clearly more willing to vote for a centre-left *coalition* than for its fractious component parts. In the Senate, the Olive Tree plus Rifondazione Comunista actually polled more votes than its opponents (44.2 against 42.9 per cent). However, the absence of stand-down agreements cost them the chance of having broadly the same number of Senators as their opponents, a result which would have considerably limited Berlusconi's room for manoeuvre. In the end, thanks to the workings of the new electoral law of 1993, the House of Liberties had a very comfortable majority in both houses: 368 seats against 261 in the Lower house, and 176 against 134 in the Upper. The way was open for unfettered government.

Italy's electoral sociology

It is perhaps worth making one or two observations about the connexions between long-standing structural trends in Italian society and the pattern of voting in 2001. The unusually large and vital presence all over the peninsula of the self-employed, and more specifically of family firms and family shops, has never made the Left's task any easier. Naturally, there is no simple translation of the force of the self-employed into right-wing votes. As is well known, the central Italian regions have developed a dynamic tradition of small firms and industrial districts, without losing much of the left-wing electoral fidelity which has characterized them since the war.¹⁴ None the less, suspicion of a lackadaisical but occasionally punitive state, and the need for 'negative' freedom from it, from its controls and above all its taxation, form part of the natural discourse of these sections of Italian society. The Christian Democrats understood this at a very early stage of the history of the Republic. The word *Libertas* stood at the centre of their political vocabulary and adorned the crusaders' shield which was the party's electoral symbol. Protection (pension schemes) and laissez-faire (a blind eye to tax evasion) were at the heart of their courting of the self-employed, both rural and urban. Berlusconi's House of Liberties is the conscious heir of these traditions. In the elections for the House of Deputies of 2001, 63.4 per cent of entrepreneurs and professionals voted for the House of Liberties, 31.7 per cent for the Olive Tree. The equivalent

¹⁴ C. Trigilia, *Grandi partiti e piccole imprese*, Bologna 1986; F. Ramella, 'Still a "Red subculture"? Continuity and change in central Italy', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. V, no. 1, 2000.

figures amongst shopkeepers, artisans and other self-employed were 54.2 and 34.7 per cent.¹⁵

Another strong connexion between Christian Democracy and the House of Liberties, all to the detriment of the Left, lies in the long-term patterns of gender voting. After the war the culture of the Church and that of Italian women overlapped in a very strong way. It was with some trepidation that both the French and the Italian Left had agreed to universal suffrage in the period 1945–47. Nearly sixty years later, women over the age of 55 and those who are practising Catholics still show a very marked preference for the centre-right. However, the pattern of women's voting in the 2001 elections is not limited to this unsurprising fact. An extraordinary 44.8 per cent of housewives—in themselves a significant social category, given the low percentages of female occupation in Italy—voted not just for the centre-right but specifically for Forza Italia. Furthermore, the more television women watched, the more they showed a propensity to vote for Silvio Berlusconi. 42.3 per cent of those who watched more than three hours a day voted for Forza Italia, compared to 31.6 per cent of those who only watched between one or two hours daily.¹⁶ The connexions between housework and the advertising of commodities, between the consumption of goods and the formation of subjectivities, between female viewing and the packaged messages of the charismatic male political figure, are here to be found in striking form.

Against this, it is worth noting that women in work, those between 45 and 54 (the 'cohort of 68'), and the youngest generation of women, 18–24 year olds, voted significantly in favour of the centre-left. However, it cannot be said that the Left has capitalized upon the favourable disposition of these sections. In the context of the general misogyny of Italian public institutions, the Left in general has never waged a determined battle for equal opportunities, and the Left Democrats in particular are not seen as the party of female emancipation, however interpreted. The Ministry of Equal Opportunities remained woefully under-resourced and under-staffed during the centre-left governments of the period 1996–2001.¹⁷

¹⁵ ITANES, *Perché ha vinto il centro-destra*, Bologna 2001, p. 6, table 4.2.

¹⁶ ITANES, pp. 50–52.

¹⁷ See the valuable testimony of the sociologist Laura Billi, Minister for Equal Opportunities between 1998 and 2000: *Riflessioni in attesa di una ex ministra*, Soveria Mannelli 2002.



To these considerations of class and gender must be added those concerning regional tradition and development. A whole school of recent Italian historiography has taught us to beware of talking in terms of a single 'South', or for that matter of a single 'North'.¹⁸ None the less, the Left's historic weakness in much of southern Italian society has cost it dear. For many decades, the experience of the Resistance in the centre-north from 1943 to 1945 was contrasted to the passive revolution of the Kingdom of the South in the same period. If the republican cause prevailed narrowly over the monarchy in the referendum of 1946, it was thanks above all to the voters of the centre-north, with some precious but limited aid from the poor peasants of Basilicata and Calabria. The rural and archaic nature of the South of 1946 has long since disappeared, but the structural weakness of the Left's vote has remained. Key southern regions, Puglia and Sicily in particular, were decisive for Berlusconi's victory in 2001. In a modernizing process characterized by its pulverization, by the distribution of cash benefits to individual families, high rates of youth unemployment, uninterrupted culture of patron-client relations and covert political collusion with organized crime, the Left rarely found the themes or personalities around which a different version of modernity could coalesce. The recent and surprising exception of Antonio Bassolino, first an outstandingly popular mayor of Naples, and now the President of the densely-inhabited region of Campania, suggests that this was not an altogether impossible task.

However, the Left's regional vulnerability is by no means confined to certain parts of the South. It now has a northern problem as well. Lombardy-Venetia, once the Italian pearl in the imperial crown of the Habsburgs, now the most economically dynamic and prosperous area of Italy, has rediscovered over the last twenty years a unity of economic purpose and of political persuasion that has effectively marginalized the Left. The Venetian provinces and many of the Lombard ones have expressed a dominant, though by no means single, culture of small family firms, conspicuous consumption and xenophobia. They have made an almost painless transition from being the fiefdoms of the Christian Democrats to the devoted followers of Umberto Bossi, and now from the northern League to Forza Italia. The centre-left has been further emarginated. At the last election its parliamentary representation

¹⁸ Above all the work of the academic journal, *Meridiana*; and R. Lumley and J. Morris, eds, *The New History of the Italian South: the Mezzogiorno Revisited*, Exeter 1997.

was reduced to the odd outpost at Trieste, the Venetian lagoon and the mountains of Trento and Belluno.

The crisis is not just a provincial one. Crucial to it has been the fate of Milan. Not that the commercial and banking capital of Italy had ever been the centre of the Left, but at the height of the Fordist period in Republican history (circa 1955–75) it boasted nearly 400,000 metalworkers in its immediate hinterland, concentrated in some of Italy's most renowned factories. In 1961 one in five Italian metalworkers were employed in the province of Milan. Not by chance was the city twinned with Birmingham. The rapid process of de-industrialization after 1980, and the contemporaneous emergence of Milan as the headquarters of Italian high tech and of Berlusconi's television and publishing empire, radically changed the balance of forces in the city.¹⁹ On the Left, the workerist ideology of old no longer had a substantive base in reality, and no fresh proposals emerged to replace it.

A project?

The temptation exists, and more than once in the twentieth century liberal and conservative European opinion has succumbed to it, of not taking seriously personal projects for political dominion. Berlusconi himself, through his joke-telling and clowning at international meetings, his perpetual smile and expansive body language (right arm draped paternally around the shoulders of a colleague or friend), has fostered a particular image of himself outside of Italy, though it only partly corresponds to that which he wishes to project. For many participants in the European public sphere he is the archetypal Italian—friendly and generous, lightweight and untrustworthy. Appearances, though, can be deceptive. His is a serious political project, drawing sustenance from some of the most profound changes in contemporary society as well as from the innovations of neoliberalism. He may well not succeed. Self-preservation is uppermost in his mind, and both his political and economic programmes suffer from improvisation. The first two years of his government, as we shall see in a moment, have certainly not gone all his way. But the manner in which he survived and then prospered between 1996 and 2001 should warn us against underestimation or flippant dismissal. History, in any case, has taught us to be wary of little men with big appetites.

¹⁹ Essential reading on this process is John Foot, *Milan since the Miracle*, Oxford 2001.

Berlusconi harbours ambitions for personal and charismatic control of the modern democratic state. Such ambitions are not couched in the language used in the frontal confrontations between dictatorship and democracy in the first half of the twentieth century. Instead, from both necessity and intent, he adopts the language of Empire, the universal values of liberty and democracy, justice and prosperity, which lie at the heart of the American global project.²⁰ This is the frame for Berlusconi's appetites, the confines of the complicated passage of persuasion which he must work. In order to do so, he has recourse to both the very new and the very old. He brings to bear his profound experience of the modern techniques and methods of mass communication, well aware of the degree to which these are penetrative of the domestic sphere. At the same time much of the content of his messages is far from new, but makes reference to very long-standing cultural codes in Italian and Mediterranean society.

I. SOCIETY, DEMOCRACY AND THE MEDIA

The logic of democratic politics and the logic of television make uneasy companions. Democratic politics depends upon lengthy and complicated policy processes, upon the diffusion of power, upon participation in decision-making. Its time-spans are protracted and its narratives often undramatic. It is sceptical of charismatic figures. Television, on the other hand, at least as presently constituted, needs personalities, 'current' affairs, conflicts, dramas and mini-dramas, verbal duels. Its time-spans are highly compressed and its narratives archetypical. In the tension between the two, it is the logic of the medium that has triumphed. Politicians of all beliefs adapt themselves to its constraints, celebrate their television personas, practise their soundbites. The power wielded by leaders, carefully protected by their spin-doctors and focus groups, has grown exponentially. At the same time, mass-media markets have witnessed a dramatic process of concentration, both vertically and horizontally. Genre firms within each distinct medium have become ever larger; concurrently, there have been mergers between firms in different types of media, greatly facilitating 'cross promotion'. The contemporary media market is not made for minnows, and public broadcasting appears ever more a beleaguered outpost.²¹

²⁰ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, MA 2000, pp. 17ff.

²¹ Thomas Meyer (with Lewis Hinchman), *Media Democracy*, Oxford 2002; Gillian Doyle, *Media Ownership*, London 2002.

The members of the global television oligarchy, of whom Silvio Berlusconi is a particularly fascinating example, are distinguished by a number of common traits: fierce attention to levels of audience share, upon which their life-blood, advertisements, depends; insatiable acquisitive tendencies; limited and conformist cultural frameworks. All these mean that the medium is not safe in their hands. They may experiment occasionally and leave some editorial independence to their subordinates, but by and large they play safe, aim for high profits and produce television of a repetitive and unedifying quality, permeated by advertisements and selling techniques of every sort. Private television is, of course, owned by the hyper-rich and run by corporate managers earning enormous salaries; but it is consumed most by their social opposites. In the United States, Italy and elsewhere, families with the lowest level of education and of income are those most television-dependent. They are also those who tend to be least involved in civil society. Their passivity and privatism are not effective bulwarks against the dominant messages being projected at them from television screens. They are rather those who are most likely to respond positively to the 'preferred reading' of the messages encoded in media texts.

It is within this context that we must examine the present Italian situation. In the period between 1988 and 1995 alone, average daily time spent watching television in Italy grew from 2 hours 53 minutes to 3 hours 35 minutes. In 1996 Mike Bongiorno, Italy's veteran quiz show compère, commented on one of his programmes: 'The statistics tell us that Italian children aged five to six watch television three or four hours a day and that old people watch even more. In Italy, we live for television, we take our arguments from it... Anything we do, we do thinking about the television'.²²

TV dreams

Central to the creation of a television culture of mass consent is the question of consumerism, with its perpetual cycle of desire, acquisition, use, disillusion, rejection, renewed desire. The housewives who vote in such large numbers for Silvio Berlusconi, and who watch so much of his television, are bombarded with purchasing proposals at fifteen-minute intervals throughout the day. Their children are subject

²² Quoted in A. Grasso, *Storia della televisione italiana*, Milan 2000, p. 623.

to equally insistent advertising—and with the volume automatically increased during the breaks. Tilde Giani Gallino's work on Italian families at the beginning of the millennium reflects the results of such bombardment: she found that children's drawings of their own families make frequent and startling reference to their own shoes, usually sneakers, above all distinguished by the logo of Nike, Adidas or Reebok. Individual identity is thus formed and expressed in the context of carefully piloted advertising messages. These are then translated and acquire material form in the world of shopping.²³

With the advance of modern consumption, ever greater emphasis has come to be placed on what Colin Campbell has called 'modern autonomous imaginative hedonism'.²⁴ Central to this concept is the place of day-dreaming and longing. The visible practice of consumption becomes just a small part of a complex model of individual hedonism, most of which takes place in the imagination of the consumer. Shifts in television advertising play to this trend. From a traditional insistence on the quality of the product and its beneficial effects on the consumer, advertising in Italy as elsewhere has come to concentrate ever more on the emotional and passionate element in communication. Advertisements have become as much about 'virtual' lifestyles as about real products. The individual is encouraged to cut loose. There arises the paradox of an invitation to absolute freedom and choice, extended by a television system of absolute conformity.

Consumerism, however, is only one pillar of this construction. A strongly normative aspect exists as well. This is no longer pushed down Italians' throats, as with Catholic propaganda in the early days of television; it has become subtle and cumulative. The advertisements, variety shows and soap operas of Italian television transmit a bland but unceasing version of what Italian family values and life *should* be. The family is seen as a loving but also ambitious and even voracious entity, the site of enterprise and saving as well as of consumption. Ideally, it lives its daily life surrounded by a multiplicity of commodities: cars, cell phones, televisions, computers. Its values are tolerantly Catholic, vaguely inclined towards

²³ Tilde Giani Gallino, *Famiglie 2000. Scene di gruppo con interni*, Turin 2000, esp. pp. 42–53. The study is particularly valuable in charting comparisons with the author's research of two decades before: *Il complesso di Laio*, Turin 1977. For the general processes involved: D. Miller, *The Dialectics of Shopping*, Chicago 2001.

²⁴ *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, Oxford 1987, p. 77.

gender equality, but with mothers still playing a central role as providers of services: emotional, gastronomic, laundry and secretarial. The Italian television family is *famelist*—in the sense of putting its own acquisitive instincts and interests first, and very rarely being portrayed as willing to sacrifice some part of these for the good of civil society, let alone the state. It is the incarnation of 'negative' freedom.

In this sense, these imagined families belong to Berlusconi. They are neat, well turned-out, sporting, joking, computerized, pro-American, globe-trotting, business-oriented, privatized. They are, to use an Italian expression, profoundly *per bene*, in the sense of that term which signifies respectability, or at least the aspiration to be such. Of course, respectable and consumerist Italy existed long before Berlusconi. But the crucial point is that he is its organic representative, the personification of the world of television advertising, of upwardly mobile dreaming become reality. Just before the elections of 2001, in the discotheques of Rimini and the Adriatic Riviera, young people told the journalist Paolo Rumiz that they would vote for Berlusconi because his television was full of young people, his party was a young one, he made them dream of success. Outside, on the road between Rimini South and San Marino, Rumiz noted forty hypermarkets in the space of 10 kilometres, with cars queuing for up to forty minutes to find a parking space.²⁵

Constructing charisma

Berlusconi, then, is not just President of the Council of Ministers. Enconced in his magnificent villa at Arcore, he also presides over the imagination of a consistent segment of the nation; not just those who already enjoy the wealth of the sixth largest economy in the world, but also those who would like to—including large numbers of southern Italian families. What is the nature of his charisma? It certainly does not lie within the canons of Max Weber's famous typology. If pure charisma for Weber was preeminently an extra- or anti-economic power which can, at most, 'tolerate, with an attitude of emotional indifference, irregular, unsystematic acquisitive acts', then Berlusconi can hardly be said to fit the bill. Nor would he fit that of Thomas Carlyle who, writing in 1840, was convinced that there were no modern heroes worthy of the name. Rather, Carlyle thought, 'they are all as bank-notes,

²⁵ *La Repubblica*, 16 May 2001.

these social dignitaries, all representing gold; and several of them, alas, always are *forged notes*'.²⁶

Berlusconi's money is real enough. Perhaps it is his charisma that is forged—in the sense of being constructed within the confines, practices and symbols of modern communication and consumption; carefully *manufactured*.²⁷ It is not that he is a particularly able orator, nor physically particularly compelling, renowned for his heroism or endowed with any other naturally charismatic qualities. For this reason he has long been underestimated. But he has worked with great care at creating and selling an image of himself. Pier Paolo Portinaro suggests three strands in this construction: that of the 'great communicator', concerned to use simple language and attentive to all the details that make up a television frame; the 'master of evasion'—not in the Houdini sense, but as the unrivalled salesman of unthinking escapism; the 'sporting fanatic', winner of trophies and munificent sponsor of a great football team. These elements must, however, be preceded by another: that of the 'self-made tycoon'. It is his acquisition of riches, far greater than those of the late Giovanni Agnelli, long considered the richest man in Italy, that endows and enables the other aspects of his charisma. Berlusconi's opulent lifestyle, 'part-Dallas, part-Mediterranean chic', may attract the scorn of some, but it is an essential element of his appeal, as is his 'total love for himself'. So great a concentration on one's own individuality corresponds well to the dominant ethos of modern Italy—best summed up by Berlusconi's own dictum of 1999: 'Individuals are their own best guides to what is good for them'.²⁸

However, perhaps the essence of his charisma lies in its mirroring qualities. Many Italians look at themselves in the mirror—a national pastime—and imagine an opulent and powerful self reflected back to them. In the admiration for Berlusconi projection and self-recognition are combined. This was clearly identified by Alessandro Meluzzi in the

²⁶ See Weber: *On Charisma and Institution Building*, Chicago 1968, p. 53; Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, London 1840, p. 11. I am grateful to Stephen Gundle for drawing my attention to this.

²⁷ Stephen Gundle, 'The death (and re-birth) of the hero: charisma and manufactured charisma in modern Italy', *Modern Italy*, vol. 111, no. 2, 1998.

²⁸ See, respectively: P. P. Portinaro, 'Sulla illegittimità del nuovo', *Teoria Politica*, vol. XI, no. 1, 1995, pp. 21–2; Quentin Peel and Fred Kapner, 'Salesman on the spot', *Financial Times*, 23 March 2002; Giorgio Bocca, *Piccolo Cesare*, Milan 2002, p. 11; Berlusconi, *L'Italia che ho in mente*, p. 118.

first number of Forza Italia's journal of ideas, *IdeAzione*. Berlusconi was one of those natural leaders who,

by their personal audacity or capacity end up by becoming the symbol of the contemporary unstoppable mania for doing, moving, feeling alive . . . A leader who will be chosen because everyone can recognize something of themselves in him, can identify themselves and that which they would want to be.²⁹

The production of consent via the media is a complicated process. It contains elements that are both of battering-ram insistence—the constant drumming of advertisements—and considerable subtlety. The President of the Council of Ministers never misses an opportunity to observe that he is often criticized on his own television channels, and is even occasionally the object of satire, as on Italy's most popular regular programme, *Striscia la notizia* (Canale 5, 8.40 pm). How, in such circumstances, can we possibly be so foolish as to make a comparison with Mussolini?

Selling it softly

At first sight this seems an impeccable position. Berlusconi has insisted on the pluralism of political voices on all news bulletins, another clear indication of his chosen adoption of the universalist language of liberalism. Recently his daughter Marisa, on becoming president of the Mondadori publishing house, the largest in Italy with 4,700 employees, and part of her father's business empire, insisted that her guiding criteria would be 'profound respect for our readers and for the market, without any pretence to indoctrinate or orientate; the importance of a plurality of ideas and choices; an extreme attention to authors and to their possibility to express themselves freely'.³⁰ Beneath the pristine surface, however, things immediately become more complicated. Take the example of the news on RAI Uno, where an almost ritualistic pluralism prevails: there is a regular parade of politicians, among whom figure members of the opposition. They all say something briefly. Berlusconi himself often appears, to say something at greater length. There then follows the *cronaca*, mainly a series of depressing incidents and fatalities of varying nature. The Pope is given a ritual few minutes and at the end it is time for sport. The general impression conveyed is of desperation

²⁹ 'Sotto le ideologie niente, solo leader concreti e vincenti', *IdeAzione*, vol. I, no. 1, 1994, p. 169.

³⁰ R. Rho, 'Mondadori a Marisa Berlusconi. "Alla presidenza con orgoglio"', *la Repubblica*, 19 February 2003.

at the state of the world, the vacuity of the politicians, the need for religion and the good sense of the Prime Minister. Dissident voices from society are never heard. The multiple associations of Italian civil society simply do not exist—unless they reach such mass proportions, as with the European Social Forum's peace march in Florence in November 2002, that they cannot be ignored.

Berlusconi also makes reference, with some guile, to market shares for different audiences: left-wing voters must have some sympathetic television reserved for them, because this makes good commercial sense. His media regime is thus one based not on the silencing of all dissenting voices, as under Fascism, but on the rule enunciated with acumen by the talk-show compère, Maurizio Costanzo: 'Power does not belong to those who talk on television. It belongs to those who permit you to talk on television'.²⁹ When mass television audiences are at stake, Berlusconi's pluralism appears of uncertain quality. He has always had his own team of 'organic' intellectuals of variable quality—Ferrara, Liguori, Sgarbi (rather unreliable)—whose programmes have barked out the line incessantly, at all times of the day and night. It was Berlusconi himself who intervened in April 2002, from Bulgaria of all places, to announce that three major dissenting voices, Enzo Biagi, Michele Santoro and Daniele Luttazzi would be banned from the six television channels now under his (indirect) control.³⁰

Italian television appears superficially as a reasonably plural, markedly repetitive and reassuring arena (variety shows and old films have always been very much to the fore). It has great appeal to an ageing population, but also to youth. In 1994, as part of a series of revealing school essays on new figures in Italian national politics, a Roman 13-year-old offered the following naïf and profound reflections on Berlusconi's media 'regime':

At school, almost all the teachers say that Berlusconi is a Fascist, that he'll sell the school to anyone who has the money to buy it . . . But if Berlusconi is a Fascist, why is he always laughing and happy? I learnt that the Fascists wore black shirts, were always in uniform, wanted the war and used their clubs on people . . . And so they certainly had no reason to laugh, they were a gloomy lot. But if Berlusconi put on a uniform, started clubbing people and wanted to go to war, then his televisions wouldn't be watched by anybody.³¹

²⁹ Interviewed on *Telegiornale*, RAI 2, 28 August 2001, 8.50 pm.

³⁰ *Independent*, 5 June 2002.

³¹ P. Nicotri, *Berlusconi de' Berlusconi*, Venice 1994, p. 47.

The debate about the degree to which media control determines people's political allegiance and culture is a wide-ranging and complicated one. Certainly, it would be foolish to assume that individuals and families simply imbibe oft-repeated television messages. In the Italian case, at least one study has revealed how delicate are the connexions between viewing and family values, how much translation, criticism and rejection is involved in the reception of television programmes.³⁴ However, it would be even more foolhardy to claim that the influence of television is marginal. At an explicitly political level, scholars are deeply divided about the weight of votes brought to Berlusconi's cause by his media dominance; such things are indeed difficult to quantify.³⁵ But if we go beyond the political sphere to the deeper level of everyday life and material culture, then the presence of such a conformist, repetitive and uncritically consumer-oriented media system—pumped out not just from 2001 but since the early 1980s, when no control was exercised on the quasi-monopolistic formation of Italian commercial television—must give rise to the deepest concern.

II. PATRIMONY AND THE STATE

Buttressed by his control of the media, Berlusconi has turned his attention to the state. He intends, in the first place and as an absolute priority, to rein in the power of judicial review and to secure his own, highly contested, legal position and that of his closest friends. This still remains his Achilles heel. He and his Minister of Justice, Roberto Castelli of the Northern League, insist that they are carrying through the operation in the name of greater judicial efficiency and the safeguarding of judicial autonomy. The rhetoric of justice and liberty are present in every area of the government's activity, but its real line of march is another. In parliament the benches of Forza Italia are occupied to no small degree by those who have worked in various parts of Berlusconi's business empire, and the lawyers who have taken his defence. The upper ranks of the state administration are, likewise, in the process of being renewed by a radical 'spoils system'. Fidelity to party and person, rather

³⁴ F. Casetti, ed., *L'ospite fisso*, Milan 1995.

³⁵ In 1994 Luca Ricolfi, on the basis of an extensive investigation, argued that the influence of Berlusconi's TN channels had been decisive in the national elections of that year: 'Elezioni e mass media. Quanti voti ha spostato la TV', *Il Mulino*, vol. XLIII, no. 6, 1994. Other political scientists, such as Giacomo Sani, have been more sceptical; see his edited volume *Mass media ed elezioni*, Bologna 2001.

than precise criteria of professionalism and experience, is the guiding light of recent reform. The CNR, Italy's funding institute for scientific research, has been placed under tight control by the Education Minister, Letizia Moratti, who was briefly Rupert Murdoch's chief executive in Italy before accepting ministerial office. State schools and universities are being starved of funds. The public health system, introduced in 1978 on universalist lines, is being undermined by regionalization and privatization—reversing its trenchant defence by the centre-left's best minister, Rosy Bindi, who is not a Left Democrat but a member of the Catholic Popolari (now part of the Margherita).⁶⁶

If all goes well, Berlusconi himself is to move, at the end of five years, from the post of President of the Council of Ministers to that of President of the Republic. He aims to do so by direct popular election, and in any case in the context of greatly added powers. Once at the Quirinale, he will have reached the apotheosis of his power, the sporting, joking, extraordinarily rich father of the Italian nation. His role, as one of his sharpest advisers Giuliano Ferrara has written, will come to resemble, of course with the appropriate self-irony, that of Louis XIV, the Sun King—and indeed, in the early years of Fininvest, Berlusconi was frequently referred to as the Sun around which the planets of his closest collaborators revolved. Berlusconi's, writes Ferrara, is 'a patrimonial conception of the state, in which public and private are indistinguishable'. The great man himself is an 'atypical figure symbolizing a new power, despised, feared and adulated throughout Europe . . . Government is not to be separated from patrimony, the State from the person'.⁶⁷

How useful or accurate is it to talk of a modern patrimonial project at work in the heart of democratic Europe? In Weber's original formulation *patriarchalism*, in which authority within the *oikos* 'is exercised by a particular individual who is designated by a definite rule of inheritance' gradually gave way in ancient societies to *patrimonialism*, in which personal, traditional authority became more extended spatially and dependent upon different forms of inter-personal relationships.

⁶⁶ The model, pioneered by Roberto Formigoni in the Lombard region, is state funding for services carried out mainly by private (Catholic) hospitals, plus privatization into the hands of cooperatives friendly to the regional government. Clientelism and privatization thus go hand-in-hand.

⁶⁷ Giuliano Ferrara, 'Prefazione', in P. Beaussant, *Anche il Re Sole sorge al mattino*, Rome 2002 (orig. ed., *Le Roi Soleil se lève aussi*, Paris 2002), pp. 12–13; Molteni, *Il gruppo Fininvest*, p. 179.

Authority became 'decentralized'. The children and slaves of the household were settled upon the land, each with their own holdings, cattle and responsibilities, and the patrimonial leader gradually formed his own administration, 'a staff of slaves, *coloni*, or conscripted subjects', as well as 'mercenary bodyguards and armies'. Naturally, decentralization had its price. The followers and subjects of the patrimonial leader owed him absolute loyalty and military service, but he too owed something to them, 'not juridically but by custom, above all . . . protection in the face of external forces and help in times of necessity'. A reciprocity of favours was thus established. In the economic field, patrimonialism lent itself to a wide variety of different possibilities, but 'the important openings for profit are in the hands of the chief and the members of his administrative staff . . . There is a wide scope for actual arbitrariness and the expression of purely personal whims on [their] part'.³⁸

Obviously, any transposition of such terminology into the modern world must be treated with the greatest of care.³⁹ We are not dealing in cattle or land, or with slaves, armed mercenaries and primitive chiefs. But the underlying mechanisms of power and personal relations delineated above have an extraordinary resonance in contemporary Italy. Personal authority and charisma (the latter no part of Weber's patrimonialism), unlimited acquisitive ambitions and ownership, the arbitrary whim of the patron resting on a weakened rule of law, the reciprocity of favours, all these are cornerstones of Berlusconi's project. However, they are being pushed to the fore in a complex and democratic social and political system. It is one that has long since traversed, albeit more imperfectly than many western European societies, the stages of material and formal rationalization. As a result resistances to such a project, as we shall see, are considerable, but so too is acquiescence.

Populism and patronage

It is worth noting, as many commentators have done, that there are also many populist elements in Berlusconi's self-presentation and political

³⁸ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, New York 1947, pp. 346–57; see also Weber, *Economia e società*, Turin 1999, vol. iv, pp. 106–7.

³⁹ The best discussion of such a transposition that I have found, albeit in pre-Berlusconi times, is P. P. Portinaro, 'Personalismo senza carisma', the preface to G. Roth, *Potere personale e clientelismo*, Turin 1990 (orig. ed. *Politische Herrschaft und persönliche Freiheit*, Frankfurt am Main 1987), pp. vii–xx.

career. He is the person who, under the vigilant and doting eye of the long-serving political commentator, Bruno Vespa, went on television to sign a formal pact with the electors: if he did not realize his principal aims in the space of a five-year term of office, he would not stand again for re-election. He, too, when faced with the confirmation on 28 January 2003 that his own trial for corrupting magistrates and that of his lawyer friend Cesare Previti were to be concluded at Milan, and not moved elsewhere, issued a video cassette from Arcore containing the following *pronunciamiento*: 'In a liberal democracy he who governs by sovereign will of the people can be judged, when he is in office and directs the affairs of State, only by his equals, by those who have been elected by the people . . . Government is by the people and by who represents it, not by who has passed a public examination to become a judge'.⁴⁰ Mény and Surel's three basic elements of populist discourse—the celebration of the people's centrality and wisdom, their constant betrayal by the elites and the old political class, their necessary replacement by a new leader—are all present in Berlusconi's speeches.⁴¹

Yet it would be a mistake to confine his project within a populist framework, for that would be to miss much of its essence. The best biography of Berlusconi, though now a little dated, is that by Giuseppe Fiori, who chose as its title *Il venditore*, the Salesman. Berlusconi is certainly a consummate salesman, and a very well prepared one.⁴² But he is also, and probably above all, a Buyer: of commodities and persons, of villas and footballers, of television channels and entertainers, of supermarkets and publishing houses, perhaps of judges as well (though we must await the results of the trials). His is a patrimonial and acquisitive instinct, fired by the production and use of wealth, by the creation of loyalty, by the need to be admired and loved. As Eugenio Scalfari, the founder of

⁴⁰ *Corriere della Sera*, 30 January 2003.

⁴¹ Yves Mény and Yves Surel, eds, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, London 2002, pp. 11–13.

⁴² *Il venditore*, Milan 1995. See also Berlusconi's 'Confidential advice for selling advertising space' (1994): 'You must always go thoroughly briefed to these meetings with the top management of a business. Because in that way you will have in front of you a "dilettante", probably unbriefed, while you will be hyper-prepared and super-professional. On the basis of my professional experience, I can confide to you that I have always won by being professional. If I've always won out, it's been rarely thanks to my talent, a few times thanks to the luck of an amateur, but I have always won thanks to technique': Stefano D'Anna and Gigi Moncalvo, eds, *Berlusconi in Concert*, London 1994, p. 300.

the daily newspaper *la Repubblica*, once wrote: 'Silvio Berlusconi loves his clan and identifies himself with it. His greatest and most generous desire would be that his clan comes to comprise the whole of Italy. Who enters therein can ask and obtain whatsoever, who remains outside is an enemy or an infidel ripe for conversion. For him, television is an unrivalled business opportunity, but it is also the principal instrument for proselytism'.⁴³ Such instincts and priorities, when combined with his plutocratic airs, do not make him a natural populist leader. At most we can say that populism enters strongly into his linguistic armoury, but that the material constitution of his project remains another. Umberto Bossi, with his rough and direct language, regional base and grass-roots social movement, fits the populist bill much better.

Devotion

Apart from labelling, which is important but must not become obsessive, there is the question of origins. Much of Berlusconi's culture and activity are the expression of deep-rooted elements in Italian history. One of the most pervasive of these is patron-client relations. The survival and indeed predominance of vertical diadic relations in practically every sphere of Italian life, after more than fifty years of formal democracy, is as disconcerting as it is fascinating. In 1876 Leopoldo Franchetti, in his famous inquest on Sicily, described in memorable terms the qualities deriving from the *clientele* of that island: 'On the one hand, a fidelity, an energy in the friendship between equals and in the devotion of inferior to superior that knows no limits, scruples or remorse. On the other . . . individuals who gradually group themselves around one or more potentate, whatever may be the foundation of his power: superior wealth and energy of character, or cunning, or other qualities'.⁴⁴ In 1973 Pierre Boussevain entitled his collection of articles on Mediterranean anthropology *Friends of Friends*. In 1994 Berlusconi addressed his employees in the following terms: 'When I work with my collaborators I know that I will find myself amongst my best friends . . . It is thus only just and indeed easy to give birth precisely at our place of work to those moments of sentiment which are the most profound root of every feeling, the expression of friendship'.⁴⁵ Intimately linked with

⁴³ *La Repubblica*, 15 January 1995.

⁴⁴ *Condizioni politiche e amministrative della Sicilia* [1876], Rome 1993, p. 40.

⁴⁵ D'Anna and Moncalvo, *Berlusconi in Concert*, p. 302; *Friends of Friends. Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*, Oxford 1973.

this instrumental friendship is the practice of gift giving. Berlusconi is renowned for his *largesse*, which takes frequent and varied forms: a portrait of his family for the compère Mike Bongiorno; a free holiday for a wounded policeman after the G8 summit at Genoa; wrist watches for the hostesses, firemen and *carabinieri* present at the NATO summit at Pratica di Mare in May, 2002. The virtues extolled in these practices are not those of citizenship but of devoted subservience, with little distinction made between the public and private sphere, between a prime minister and a patron, a civil servant and a friend or relation.

A second element is that of the *condottiere*. Berlusconi is a *cavaliere* of business, not of arms. Yet his is a martial approach to politics, based on high risk-taking and swift manoeuvre. It was these qualities that characterized his *scesa in campo* in February 1994, and which gave him the impetus for an extraordinary victory just three months later. The image of the *cavaliere* is a potent one in Italian popular culture. Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel II, often both on horseback, are ubiquitous in town squares. In 1994, as part of the same series of school essays quoted above, a thirteen-year-old from Bari wrote: 'It's such a long time since they built monuments to famous personalities on horseback. Those that do exist are all monuments to famous people of the past. But now that there's Cavalier Berlusconi, Head of the government and able winner of so many things, perhaps it's time for another equine statue. It could be of bronze or of marble, and he could be leading a courageous cavalry charge, crying "Forza Italia!"'.⁴⁶

Another still is a constant and exaggeratedly stated respect for the Catholic church. All Italian politics, both of Left and Right, pass through the gateway of the Vatican City. For some, like Giulio Andreotti, the doors have always been wide open. For others, even devout Catholics like Alcide De Gasperi, the first leader of the Christian Democrats, they were partially closed. Togliatti tried to win the Church's acquiescence by forcing through, in the face of secular opposition, the continuation of the Lateran pacts in the new Italian Constitution of 1948. Berlusconi's version of this takes the form of state subsidies for private Catholic schools, and support for as many of the doctrinal elements of the Church that do not contradict too glaringly his opinion polls and his own conduct. However, in the context of deep-rooted Italian culture, the most interesting aspect of the House of Liberties' Catholicism is its enthusiasm for

⁴⁶ Nicotri, *Berlusconi de' Berlusconi*, p. 22.

one of the most archaic expressions of Italian Christianity—the adulation of charismatic figures endowed with miraculous powers. Padre Pio, the Capuchin friar who is supposed to have received the stigmata, is the supreme example. In April 2000, Berlusconi's Canale 5 broadcast a two-part dramatization of Padre Pio's life. Aldo Grasso, in his monumental history of Italian television, awarded it the accolade of programme of the year. 'The director Carlo Carlei has not spared us anything . . . where there was the possibility of exaggerating, he has exaggerated: rays of sun perforating the clouds, a photographic style taken directly from *ex voto* offerings, bleeding statues . . . burning bushes, furious battles with Evil which at times takes the form of a Molossian hound'.⁴⁷

Lastly, it is worth noting that patrimonial attitudes to the Italian state are not entirely new. Leaving aside the Fascist experience, which was *sui generis*, one of the earliest Catholic critiques of the Christian Democratic regime, that of Ruggiero Orfei, was precisely that the party had 'occupied' the state.⁴⁸ The development of an independent administrative class, with its own codes of conduct and *esprit de corps*, was never the Italian state's strong point. The powers of discretionary conduct and service to the political class were always much greater. Even the judiciary enjoyed very little real autonomy before the 1960s. However, the Christian Democrat's occupation of the state was qualitatively different from that projected by Berlusconi. None of the DC leaders ever had the wealth or the media charisma that he has acquired. Most of them spoke to the people at very great length in an incomprehensible '*politichese*'. Above all, none of them was ever allowed to become the acclaimed and undisputed leader of the party, and those who tried, as Amintore Fanfani and Ciriaco De Mita learned to their cost, came to a sorry end, victims of lethal inter-factional plotting.

III. BERLUSCONI IN POWER

The translation of Berlusconi's project into political reality has so far been an uphill and accident-laden task. His government was sworn in on 11 June 2001. Of 23 ministers only two were women: Stefania Prestigiacomo at Equal Opportunities, and the redoubtable Letizia Moratti at Education. The Northern League was strongly over-represented in the new executive. Its electoral showing had been very poor, only 3.9

⁴⁷ Grasso, *Storia della televisione italiana*, p. 694.

⁴⁸ R. Orfei, *L'occupazione del potere*, Milan 1976.

per cent, but pre-electoral pacts were respected rigorously, for Berlusconi was haunted by the possibility of another rapid dissolution of his centre-right coalition, as in December 1994.

In the event, one of his greatest motives for satisfaction has been the solidity of the coalition. Many commentators were convinced that Fini and Bossi would not last long together around the same ministerial table. Too great were the distances between them in terms of culture, personality and electoral support: the one a cold and capable Roman politician, ex-Fascist, with his backing mainly from the South of the country; the other a loud-mouthed northern populist who sometimes preached the virtues of the Resistance. Instead they appear to have got on famously, both evidently enjoying power. The new law on immigration, a deeply iniquitous and racist piece of legislation, bears their joint signature.⁴⁹ However, Bossi's plans for radical devolution, now at an advanced stage, may yet lead to tension. Both Berlusconi and Fini are centralizers at heart, and must be reluctant to accord so much power to the regional fiefdoms which Bossi has in mind. On the other hand, Bossi has staked his whole reputation on this type of decentralization. Northerners, according to him, must have control of the wealth they produce; of their own taxes, education and police force. Any idea of the central state exercising a redistributive role between the regions should be abandoned.

A spluttering economy

The centre-right coalition has thus held firm so far, but the economy has not. Berlusconi's project, inspired as it is by conspicuous consumption and the celebration of opulence, is especially dependent upon high levels of growth. Not only have these latter not materialized, but the Italian economy, along with the European one, has slumped badly in the past eighteen months. Massive lay-offs at FIAT are only the most visible evidence of this extensive conjunctural crisis. Furthermore, the introduction of the euro has created serious problems of credibility, for prices have risen steeply in the wake of monetary conversion. Widespread scorn greeted the insistence of ISTAT, the government's statistical office, that price rises have remained under 3 per cent per annum. The net

⁴⁹ For an explanation of the law: A. Ballerini and A. Benna, *Il muro invisibile. Immigrazione e legge Bossi-Fini*, Genoa 2002.

result of all this is that Italian consumption has dropped to one of its lowest points in the history of the Republic: an average growth rate of only 0.4 per cent in 2002, against a European average of 0.5 per cent and the American figure of 3.1 per cent.

Behind this very poor performance lies a graver structural problem. Many key indicators now point to the fact that the Italian economy is losing ground on a global scale. Its market share of world trade exports declined some 16 per cent between 1994 and 1999. In the same period its Gross Domestic Product grew much more slowly than the Euro Zone average. Research and Development spending is 1 per cent of GDP, about half the average of major industrial countries. Administrative burdens on start-ups are by far the most onerous of all the OECD countries.⁵⁰ Competitiveness has slumped. Italy's largest companies, rampant in the early 1980s, have performed dismally in the ensuing twenty years: Olivetti is now a mere holding company for Telecom Italia, FIAT, having once sold more cars than Volkswagen on the European market, is well on the way to becoming a regional unit of General Motors. There are exceptions, but they are not enough, nor big enough. As for Italy's myriad of small firms and industrial districts, more than once they have been given up for dead only to arise again miraculously. Their flexibility, design capacity and incremental innovations make one wary of predictions of imminent demise, but there is no doubt that the going has got tougher.

In the face of these major problems, it is difficult to discern a coherent economic strategy emerging from the government, even within the narrow perspective of neoliberalism.⁵¹ Confindustria (the Italian employers' association) has grown increasingly impatient. In one or two cases, such as the raising of minimum pensions, electoral promises have been kept. But very many others have gone by the board: major infrastructural projects have not begun, administrative procedures have not been simplified, pension reform has been postponed. At the same time, falling tax revenue and low growth have been translated into major public-spending cuts, which have rained down upon municipal government, social services, schools and universities.

⁵⁰ On these and other aspects of Italy's increasing structural weakness, see OECD *Economic Surveys, 2001–02. Italy*, Paris 2002.

⁵¹ P. Onofri, 'Economia', in F. Tuccari, ed., *Il governo Berlusconi. Le parole, i fatti, i rischi*, Bari 2002, pp.153–68.

A strong odour of crony capitalism pervades many of the government's economic initiatives. Within weeks in office, it had rendered innocuous the legal sanctions against accounting fraud, taking the opposite path to the United States in the wake of the Enron scandal. Fininvest itself had been accused of cooking its books. 'Negative' freedom has triumphed for the privileged classes in the form of tax amnesties—one such being that on undeclared capital illegally shipped abroad; another, more recent, on the heavy debts of football clubs, amongst which Berlusconi's own Milan AC. Inheritance tax has been abolished, a truly patrimonial action. Non-interference is also to be extended to the highly significant case of those who have constructed houses without building permits, a pervasive phenomenon in southern Italy, and one which has indelibly affected the landscape there. Left-wing administrators of southern cities, such as Catania, had tried to combat the phenomenon by beginning demolition work. Berlusconi, on the other hand, intends to push through a 'more modern and positive norm' which would replace demolition with 'the obligation to realize a garden, contribute to a park or build a playground'. Illegal constructions, which had reached a peak of 125,000 per year in 1984, had diminished to less than 30,000 by 2001. Their numbers have now begun to rise rapidly again, above all in Sicily.²⁹ The government's magnanimous gestures of dispensation, in the great Roman papal tradition, have done very little for fiscal compliance but a great deal for a generalized sense of *laissez-faire* complicity.

Police freedoms

Liberty, in the sense of the 'taking of liberties', was also to be found at work at Genoa in July 2001 during the G8 summit, in the now notorious actions of the Italian forces of order. As the magistrates' enquiry slowly unfolds, it is becoming evident that the Italian police felt that they had a freedom of manoeuvre against the summit protesters which they had not previously enjoyed. Whether this was a subjective reaction on their part, or the result of specific instructions, is not clear. In either case, sections of the police communicated to the demonstrators—whom they terrorized and even tortured in the Bolzaneto barracks, and whom they beat up in the Diaz school during their night raid of 21–22 July—that 'now our side is in command'. The principal evidence used by the special

²⁹ *La Repubblica*, 23 January 2003.

forces to justify this night raid—two molotov cocktails—turn out to have been planted by the police themselves.

There is a very wide spectrum on which it is possible to measure national police forces, from the unarmed servants of the local community to the terror gangs of the South American dictatorships. In the Italian case many commentators, among whom must be numbered the author of this article, thought that the slow forward movement of Italian democracy had reached and deeply influenced even those areas of the Italian state historically most resistant to a democratic culture. From the basement of the Bolzaneto barracks came a strident negation of any such assumption. Here instead, alive and well, was a purely Fascist culture: Fascist in its slogans, in its brutality, in its wanton disregard for the most elementary rights of those taken into custody.³³

In the run-up to the European Social Forum in Florence in November 2002 there were many fears of a repeat performance. A carefully orchestrated media campaign had declared the city 'too precious' to host such an event. The 'Black Bloc' were about to descend to destroy Michelangelo's David, Cellini's Perseus and much else besides. In the event a different model of policing prevailed: discreet, non-confrontational, cooperative. The replacement of the Minister of the Interior, Claudio Scajola, with a long-toothed Christian Democrat, Beppe Pisanu, more used to the politics of collaboration, is one explanation for this shift. The good sense of the local Prefect, Achille Serra, is another, while the collective pressure exercised by the Forum on potentially violent elements constitutes a third. However, there is no way of telling how long the 'Florence model' will hold. The structural problem remains unresolved of a police force which is to a disturbing extent deeply undemocratic. Nor is the government of the 'House of Liberties' likely to solve it, since unqualified support for the forces of law and order is much more its style.

Conflicting interests

Immigration, devolution, the economy, law and order—these are all standard priorities in contemporary Continental democracies. However, what is not is the personal patrimony and on-going trials of the

³³ The tales of horror did not come just from *i ragazzi di Genova*, but from such conservative newspapers as the *Sunday Times* and *El Mundo*.

incumbent Prime Minister. This great anomaly has occupied much of the Italian government's energy and that of public opinion.⁵⁴ It is a true indicator of Berlusconi's attitude to the relationship between private property and public responsibility that, nearly two years after coming to power, no law on the conflict of interests (primarily his interests) has been passed by a parliament where he has large majorities in both houses. Back in June 2002, Pisani promised the imminent realization of the law, 'armed with a severe system of sanctions, as the opposition has requested'.⁵⁵ Little has been forthcoming. The government's proposed law, left happily drifting in parliament, foresees the institution of a control Authority with limited powers, whose head is appointed by the Presidents of the two chambers of parliament—both of whom are, at the present time, members of the centre-right coalition. Article 2 of the law attempts a distinction between active control of an enterprise and 'the mere ownership' of it, which is to be left in the hands of the proprietor. As the well-known liberal political scientist Giovanni Sartori has commented: 'The central question is that of power. In my personal library I have about a hundred books on the argument. Every single one of them explains that property constitutes power and bequeaths it'.⁵⁶

A recent Roman lunch provides an instructive instance of the forms which Berlusconi's conflict of interests may take. On 12 February 2003, Berlusconi, in his role of Prime Minister, entertained Rupert Murdoch at the Palazzo Grazioli in Rome. Present, too, was Fedele Confalonieri, probably Berlusconi's oldest friend and president of his company Fininvest. The conversation over lunch, according to reports, concerned the future of Italy's television networks and, in particular, Murdoch's bid to take control of both the most important channels of Italian pay TV, Stream and Telepiù. If he succeeds, Telepiù's record of financing independent documentaries will, to judge by Murdoch's track record, come to an abrupt end. Even more importantly, Italian commercial television will be dominated in the future by a Berlusconi-Murdoch duopoly. In such a situation, so one would imagine, the role of the Italian Prime Minister is to identify what is likely to be in the best interests of the nation, and in particular of public television. But how

⁵⁴ 'It is as if this man has in some way to protect himself from the State at the very moment in which he has been called to its helm'; E. Mauro, 'Il conflitto di interessi che soffoca le istituzioni', *la Repubblica*, 27 February 2003.

⁵⁵ *Corriere della Sera*, 22 June 2002.

⁵⁶ 'Quella vedetta è un po' miope', *Corriere della Sera*, 2 March 2002.

can he, if he is simultaneously Prime Minister and proprietor of one of the two enterprises involved, and if his oldest friend is invited to lunch to represent the interests of that very enterprise? Afterwards Rupert Murdoch was escorted to the nearby Ministry of Communications. There the Minister, Maurizio Gasparri of National Alliance, declared himself an enthusiastic supporter of the new project, which would 'take into account the tastes of the Italian public'. 'This will not be a colonialist television', the Minister reassured the journalists present. Murdoch's Roman tour finished with a brief visit to the office of the Guarantor for Telecommunications, an office hardly noted for the power or decisiveness of its interventions. By seven o'clock Murdoch was back in his private jet and on the way to London.⁵⁷

As in the case of fraudulent company accounting, the comparison with the United States makes for interesting reading. Michael Bloomberg, the present Mayor of New York, has a career pattern, personal wealth and electoral expenditure which bear a passing resemblance to those of Silvio Berlusconi. His business empire is valued at around \$4 billion, while that of Berlusconi, worth around \$10.3 billion at the time of the 2001 election, is now estimated by *Forbes* at \$5.9 billion. Bloomberg has a large publishing business based in New York, with 8,000 employees, a radio station and a very influential cable television company, specializing in financial information for banks and stock-market operators. He spent an estimated \$60 million on his election campaign, a sum which broke all previous records for New York elections. Like Berlusconi, Bloomberg presented himself as a man who would succeed as mayor because he had always succeeded in the past. However, the Conflicts of Interest Board subjected his private assets to the most severe scrutiny and made a number of pressing recommendations. All his shares, for instance, which have anything to do with the affairs of the City of New York have had to be sold immediately. Nor are public attitudes to the culture of the taking and receiving of gifts the same as in Berlusconi's Italy. The Mayor wished to donate 'Bloomberg Terminals' to an under-equipped city administration. He was not allowed to do so. Such rigidity may appear excessive, but much depends on what store is set by public ethics, and how great is the awareness that even minor violations constitute the beginning of a very slippery slope.

⁵⁷ *L'Unità*, 13 February 2003.

The US example is worth citing not because of any presumed perfection in the regulation of its democracy. Its *laissez-faire* attitudes to electoral spending, for instance, have been disastrous. In 1976 the Constitutional Court ruled in the case of Buckley against Valeo that limits on electoral spending were a violation of an individual candidate's freedom. Any such limits, according to the Court, represented 'substantial . . . restraints on the quantity and diversity of political speech [because] every means of communicating ideas in today's mass society requires the expenditure of money'.⁵⁸ No clearer constitutional invitation exists for economically dominant interests to buy up media space in order to determine the outcome of elections.

However, it is precisely the light and shade of the American system that serves as an interesting counterpoint to the Italian case. To what measure are different democracies equipped, as a result of their history, to limit and control modern patrimonial figures such as Bloomberg and Berlusconi? In what areas can the latters' great resources not be employed, which principles of public ethics are non-negotiable, what barriers must not be crossed? These were questions posed by the *Economist* when it proclaimed, in a famous front cover and editorial of 28 April 2001, on the eve of the Italian elections, that Berlusconi was 'unfit' to govern Italy. Both his macroscopic conflict of interests and his highly controversial legal record, much of it still to be determined, ruled him out of play. The *Economist* was rewarded with a pending libel suit for millions of dollars in the Italian courts—serving, too, as a shot across the bows to other, less well-endowed publications.

Instruments of law

In the nearly two years since the *Economist* published its inquest, the legal problems of Berlusconi and his clan have always received priority action in the centre-right coalition. Berlusconi himself, convinced that he is the victim of a judicial plot, has instructed his team of lawyers—at a cost, he estimates, of 500 billion lire so far—to do everything in their power to delay the key remaining trials.⁵⁹ Most of his lawyers are members of parliament and even, as in the case of Gaetano Pecorella, the President of the Justice Commission of the Lower House. The greater

⁵⁸ J. H. Birnbaum, *The Money Men: the Real Story of Political Power in America*, New York 1996, p. 34.

⁵⁹ *Corriere della Sera*, 30 January 2003.

the delay, the more chance for the statute of limitations (the expiry of the time allowed for the case to be heard at all three levels of Italian justice) to come into operation. Various devices have been invented, some more successful than others. On 5 October 2001 the new law on international rogatories came into being. It renders more complicated the transmission and admission of legally relevant documentation from other countries—demanding original copies of bank statements and trial transcripts, for example. In December of the same year, Italy attempted to block the introduction of a European warrant for arrest for crimes such as corruption, money-laundering and fraud. Berlusconi admitted candidly that he was disturbed by the prospect of such powers in the hands of a judge like the Spaniard Baltasar Garzón. The latter had brought charges against him for tax fraud and the breach of antitrust laws regarding the activities in Spain of the television company Telecinco.⁶⁰

On 31 December 2001, Roberto Castelli, the Justice Minister, attempted to transfer one of the Milanese judges sitting in the case concerning the ownership of the Mondadori publishing house. Cesare Previti, one of Berlusconi's closest friends and former Defence Minister, is accused of having corrupted the judges in the original 1991 case to find in favour of Berlusconi. Castelli's 'administrative' intervention was eventually blocked by the Court of Appeal. In October 2002, in the face of widespread opposition, the 'Cirami' law, named after its principal proponent, a Sicilian jurist, came into being. It reintroduced the concept of 'legitimate suspicion': any citizen on trial can claim that there exists the legitimate suspicion of the court's non-neutrality, and ask that his or her trial be transferred elsewhere. It was on this basis that Berlusconi's lawyers requested that the key trials concerning their client and Cesare Previti be shifted from Milan to Brescia. Such a move, with its concomitant delays, would almost certainly have led to the statute of limitations being enforced. However, in a dramatic sentence of 30 January 2003, the Corte di Cassazione ruled that the trials were to remain in Milan. Both the blocking of Castelli's attempt to transfer the judge in the Mondadori case, and the ruling of the Corte di Cassazione on the question of 'legitimate suspicion', are indicators of a strong dialectic at play within the Italian judiciary. I shall return in more detail to the question of such resistances, both institutional and not, in the last section of this essay.

⁶⁰ B. Spinelli, 'Sotto sorveglianza', *La Stampa*, 9 December 2001.

The magistrates' lack of ductility has made the Berlusconi government ever more determined to carry through a radical reform of the judicial system. That it needs reforming is beyond doubt, for it is one of the slowest and least efficient in Europe. It also abuses 'preventative custody'—there is no *habeas corpus* in Italy—and overvalues the evidence of those who turn state witness. The prison system is bursting apart, with 50,000 inmates crammed into cells built for half that number. The judiciary itself, which was granted wide-ranging powers by the 1948 Constitution, must take its share of responsibility for the present state of affairs.⁶⁴ However, what is at stake is not just a question of efficiency, or mitigation of a brutal system, fundamental though both these are. The Berlusconi government intends to bring the judges to heel, to destroy that autonomy which was the child of the 1948 Constitution, and which reached maturity from the late 1960s onwards. If successful, the government will undermine fatally the most independent judiciary in Europe.

Berlusconi at war

Space does not permit a full treatment of other aspects of the Berlusconi administration—from cultural policy to privatizations; from immigration to pensions and the civil service. But some mention must be made of foreign policy, for it is in this field that Berlusconi was judged most favourably by the electorate at the end of his first year in office. Initially, on the instigation of the President of the Republic, Berlusconi had appointed Renato Ruggiero, a former head of the World Trade Organization, to the post of Foreign Minister. After six months of bickering with his jealous, more politically oriented and euro-sceptical colleagues in the Italian Cabinet, Ruggiero quit on 6 January 2002. Berlusconi himself immediately took over the reins of the Foreign Office. For most of the rest of the year, until he ceded the post to Franco Frattini of Forza Italia, Berlusconi worked hard and with obvious pleasure at giving the Italians the impression that Italy under his leadership counted for more in Europe and the world. The synchrony of his views with those of the American President certainly helped him on his way. And the occasional gaffe, such as his famous remark about the superiority of western culture over that of Islam, appeared to do him no more than passing harm, at least amongst the majority of the Italian electorate.

⁶⁴ For a severe indictment of the recent actions of the Italian judiciary, see Perry Anderson, 'Land without Prejudice', *London Review of Books*, 21 March 2002.

Foreign affairs also allowed him a new arena in which to project his not inconsiderable talent for image-making and fabulation. The NATO summit of 28 May 2002, at the military base of Pratica di Mare south of Rome, was an excellent case in point. Berlusconi went to extreme lengths to present the summit to the Italians as an exceptional historical event, marking the integration of ex-Communist Russia into the Alliance. At the same time he presented himself as having played a key role in mediating between the American and Russian leaders. Practically the entire Italian media, both video and newsprint, followed him in this representation of the event. The summit had been 'epoch-making', it had changed the 'course of the history of the world', Berlusconi had personally 'put an end to the Cold War', the meeting had crowned his 'titanic effort of mediation between the Great Powers'. All this had about it more than a little of the staged events of the 1930s. It was only a shame, as the irreverent Italian journalist Curzio Maltese pointed out, that the rest of the world had not noticed the enormous significance of what had taken place.⁶⁴ Of the twenty principal European and American newspapers, only one, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* had judged Pratica di Mare worthy of the front page. In none of them was there any reference to the fundamental role of Silvio Berlusconi. Of greater interest for nearly all of them, as far as Italy was concerned, was the crisis at FIAT. For the Americans what mattered was the meeting of Bush with the Pope and the scandal of paedophilia Catholic priests.

With the approach of war, however, not even Berlusconi's formidable domestic propaganda machine could mask the contradictions of his policy. His subservient relationship with Bush, and Italy's long-standing Atlanticist policies, made the country an early member of the 'Coalition of the Willing' in the assault on Iraq and Berlusconi a signatory of the pro-war 'United We Stand' letter to the *Wall Street Journal* of 30 January 2003. Such a stance, however, flew in the face of very strong Catholic feeling and, sin of all sins, the opinion polls—which, in February 2002, registered a nearly 90 per cent opposition to war. Berlusconi's support became distinctly more *sotto voce*. In the end he declared Italy to be non-belligerent—article 14 of the Italian Constitution explicitly repudiates war as a means of resolving international controversies—while at the same time 'supportive' of the Anglo-American war effort; a contorted

⁶⁴ 'La Nato e Berlusconi, una fiaba italiana', *la Repubblica*, 30 May 2002; P. Di Caro, 'La gioia di Berlusconi: "Tutto merito nostro"', *Corriere della Sera*, 29 May 2002.

position. As with Germany, all facilities remained at the Americans' disposal, and the Vicenza base in north-east Italy provided the jump-off point for the US paratroopers who landed in northern Iraq in the last week of March 2002. No Blair or even Aznar, Berlusconi's domestic ability for swift manoeuvre and high risk-taking have not transferred themselves easily to the international stage.

Faltering in the downturn

In a relaxed moment at the beginning of June 2002, Berlusconi explained to Italian journalists his essentially paternal functions as head of the government. From Cabinet, parliament and society came many requests for governmental expenditure, 'just as a wife asks for a new boiler after the electrician has been called too many times, a daughter for the money to enroll on an English language course, a son to change the family car. But we, just like a father, must discriminate with good sense between the various requests.'⁶³ Things have not gone at all like this. The poor showing of the Berlusconi government lends itself to various explanations. One is the 'overpromising' which, as Mény and Surel have suggested, is a typical feature of modern populism. In Berlusconi's case the promises, as we have seen, were solemn and staged on television. Very few of them have so far been kept. Another explanation, much propagated by the veteran political commentator Gianpaolo Pansa, concentrates on the quality of Berlusconi's team. His project may be ambitious, but the human capital employed on it is for the most part mediocre and inexperienced. A third, already mentioned, is that the downturn in the economy has rendered fulfilment very much more difficult.

All these have much to recommend them, but need to be placed in the wider context of the tensions that exist between the various parts—patrimonial, populist, neoliberal—of Berlusconi's project. The primacy of his own interests, their overspilling into the public sphere, and their necessary defence in tricky and frankly suspect circumstances, has taken its toll. Although the Italians have not shown a particular sensibility to questions such as the conflict of interests and the autonomy of the judiciary, at the present time some 65 per cent of them think that, if

⁶³ R. de Gennaro, 'Berlusconi felice', *la Repubblica*, 1 June 2002.

Berlusconi is found guilty of corrupting judges, he should resign.⁶⁴ For a long time Berlusconi played on the fact that his patrimonial ambitions not only did not damage his populist appeal but enhanced it. There are signs, evident if not conclusive, that these two elements are entering into conflict with each other.

Secondly, the neoliberalism of some of his most active ministers—Letizia Moratti, for instance—with their insistence on privatization and a highly flexible labour market, with a corresponding weakening of worker and citizen rights, is anathema to a populist project, which seeks to reassure and integrate, not atomize and divide. The economic downturn, with its redundancies and increasing sense of risk, has obviously heightened such a contradiction. Neoliberalism had great purchase and fascination at its inception more than twenty years ago. The ‘invisible hand’ of the market seemed to offer infinite possibilities for acquisition and upward mobility to individuals and their families. A ‘late’ and tired version, in very different global circumstances, does not appear to possess such alchemic powers. The major preoccupation of the Italians, revealed by all the opinion polls, is the finding and keeping of work. Neoliberal cutbacks of state expenditure, at a time of economic downturn, offer very little reassurance in this respect.

Nor has the contradiction between a free-market philosophy and a personalistic and sometimes monopolistic control of resources and opportunities, as in the field of communications, gone unnoticed. Very recently a group of business men from the northeast of the country, amongst whom was Luciano Benetton, wrote to the Prime Minister. They complained bitterly that they were being prevented from investing in southern regions where the House of Liberties holds political power. ‘Too often’, wrote the industrialists, ‘local exponents of your coalition behave as if the contract with the Italians which you signed is simply a question that regards your own person’.⁶⁵

Silvio Berlusconi has not performed well to date, and recent events have greatly complicated his project. On no account, though, should he be underestimated. He has no intention of resigning and has always shown very considerable reserves of energy and determination in times of difficulty. In mid-March 2003, 44 per cent of Italians were still firmly on

⁶⁴ SWG opinion poll of 30–31 January 2003, cited in *L'Espresso*, 13 February 2003.

⁶⁵ “Silvio rimembri ancor”, *Venerdì de la Repubblica*, 14 February 2003.

the side of his 'House of Liberties', a tribute to the enduring permeative powers of his overall project.⁶⁶

IV. RESISTANCES

Within the state, it has been the judiciary that has been most under attack. The House of Liberties' lack of a sense of limits and their anthropological need to be free from restraint made this attack inevitable, even if their leader had not been personally involved in a number of trials. For the most part, the judiciary have responded with tenacity and determination. Historically, they have been far from a united group, riven rather by political influence and faction fighting. Berlusconi has forced a cohesion upon them which would have been unthinkable in other circumstances.

In many ways the opening of the juridical year, an event of pomp and circumstance in the Italian institutional calendar, on 12 January 2002 was a major point of departure. A significant number of magistrates and judges—the two are organically connected in Italy by forming part of the same career structure—deserted the opening ceremonies in their respective cities, leaving black togas draped symbolically across abandoned seats. Francesco Saverio Borrelli, the chief procurator at Milan and the central figure in the 'Clean Hands' campaign from 1992 onwards, made his last speech before retirement. He invited the judiciary to 'resist, resist, resist', as General Cadorna had urged the Italian army to do on the line of the Piave during the First World War, in the critical weeks of October and November 1917 when the Austrians seemed poised to break through to the Po plain. It was from Borrelli's words that many of the subsequent actions in civil society took their cue. Later in the year the magistrates organised a highly successful one-day strike, and Berlusconi's verbal assault on the judiciary in the wake of the Cirami law decision ('they are nothing but a self-interested corporation') led to a further closing of the ranks.

⁶⁶ Abacus opinion poll, cited in M. Giannini, 'Il cortocircuito del Cavaliere', *la Repubblica*, 20 March 2003. This was the figure for the uninominal seats in the Chamber of Deputies, with the Olive Tree Coalition at 46 per cent and Rifondazione Comunista at 6 per cent.

However, no one should bet on the judiciary seeing off the challenge. A Minister of Justice hell-bent on reform, with an ample parliamentary majority behind him and more than three years of the legislature ahead, cannot easily be stopped. Already, the composition of the High Council of the Magistracy has been changed, with more representation being given to political appointees. Furthermore, it is not clear what support can be mustered from other parts of the state apparatus. If we return, for a moment, to the question of what antibodies democratic states offer in the face of newly personalized power, then the case of Italy is not a comforting one. The lack of a developed ethos of public service in many parts of the administration, the uncertainty of the rule of law, the tradition of *trasformismo*—that is, the willingness of politicians and administrators to abandon long-stated views and adapt their principles to changed political circumstances: all of these argue against a protracted and coherent institutional resistance to Berlusconi's project. The opposition that will come from within the state is of a more passive sort. In the Italian Republic the passing of legislation and its subsequent implementation is frequently a complicated and accident-laden sequence of events. Pushing reform through, of whatever sort, is uphill work. Parliamentary obstructionism, the absence of administrative cooperation and efficiency, the recourse to administrative law, are only some of the mechanisms that can undermine a government's programme. Berlusconi and his colleagues have already felt the negative effects of these procedural *longueurs*.

The position of the President of the Republic is a particularly delicate one. The President has limited powers of intervention, but is expected to set the moral and political tone for the country. His is the New Year's message to the Italians, his the task of almost daily speech-making at official events. At the time of the 'Clean Hands' campaign in the early 1990s, it was the President of the Republic, the ex-Christian Democrat Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, who gave explicit backing to the anti-corruption offensive of the reforming minority of the magistrates. The present incumbent at the Quirinale, a former Governor of the Bank of Italy and ex-Prime Minister, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, has chosen a much more cautious line. He has made it clear that the centre-right's parliamentary majority gives it the full right to govern, but at the same time he has tried to exercise some control over its actions. Consequently, he has worked behind the scenes, proposing and modifying as the case arises. He urged, as we have noted, the appointment of Renato Ruggiero upon a reluctant Berlusconi, and insisted on the modifying of a crucial

phrase in the Cirami law, thus giving the Court of Appeal more space for manoeuvre. His attempted bi-partisan policies have won the appreciation of most of the government (with the exception of the Northern League), and most of the opposition. His popularity ratings are higher than those of any other figure in the country.

Yet more than once ostensible control has bordered on complicity. The President of the Republic has never made explicit the corrosive effects of the government's actions upon Italian democracy. Two factors play their part here. One is the nature of the Presidency itself. It has limited powers under the Italian Constitution, and the Quirinale palace—as the bizarre behaviour of more than one of its occupants has taught us in the past—is not a good place from which to understand Italian history or society. Its isolation and endless agenda of formal appointments, with the constant presence there of 'official' Italy, take their toll. Secondly, Ciampi is more than eighty years old. He is as astute as ever, but age appears to have accentuated those predilections for caution and compromise that have always been a strong element of his character. His untiring patriotic propaganda, with its hoped-for vision of a nation united by its virtues (and its national anthem), rather than divided by its vices, is highly revealing in this regard. The unity of a democratic community is certainly a precious good, but it has to be founded on a certain minimum number of non-negotiable bases.

As for the parliamentary opposition of the Olive Tree coalition, it has been uncertain from the start, caught between its own wish to deny that anything significant was happening, and the daily and unmistakable evidence that something was. For seven months, from June 2001 to January 2002, the opposition remained in a coma. During this time its prevailing view was that the House of Liberties represented no fundamental threat, and in many ways would do the same thing as the centre-left had done, only with much less competence. No serious analysis of Berlusconi's project emerged from its ranks, still less a critique of its own years in government. Instead much energy was consumed, as always, in the jockeying for position between the coalition's constituent parts and leaders. The politics of the Olive Tree remained extraordinarily self-referential, confined almost entirely to the parliamentary palace of Montecitorio. And Rifondazione Comunista, sealed up in a ghetto of its own making, was too small to make much difference one way or another.

From January 2002 onwards, this depressing picture was radically transformed by a wave of protest, as vast as it was unexpected, which swept through many parts of Italian civil society. Although the actors in this protest often overlapped and collaborated one with another, it is possible to discern three distinct strands: the first of these was a revitalized trade union movement, centred upon the CGIL and its leader Sergio Cofferati. It was the CGIL which organized in March 2002 what became the largest demonstration in the history of the Republic, with between two and three million people from every part of the peninsula gathered in Rome, in and around the Circo Massimo. The protest was against the government's proposed abolition of article 18 of the Workers' Statute of 1972, which prevents employers from sacking workers 'without just cause'.

The second strand was a largely middle-class movement, motivated primarily but not exclusively by questions of justice and pluralism of information. Here too the protest received its consecration in the form of an extraordinary demonstration, this time in Piazza San Giovanni in Rome in September 2002. Born of the outrage felt at the proposed 'Cirami' law, the demonstration gathered more than 800,000 people, in and around Rome's largest piazza. It was self-financed, without the presence or aid of the centre-left parties. Nanni Moretti, the outstanding Italian film director, made the opening speech; the 91 year-old former trade-union leader, Vittorio Foa, one of the concluding ones.

The final strand is that of the new global movement, drawing its sustenance above all from the generation now aged between 18 and 25, loosely federated in the Social Forums of all Italy's major cities. Italy's Social Forums are the strongest and most active in Europe, and it was in recognition of this fact that the first European Social Forum was held in Florence in November of 2002. The event, as has already been mentioned, led to the outbreak of mass hysteria in the media and parliament. Some 40,000 people participated from all over Europe, and the Forum came to an end with another massive and peaceful demonstration, against the imminent threat of war in Iraq. Nearly one million people took part. On 15 February, 2003, in coincidence with other world-wide demonstrations, some two to three million people once again marched through Rome.

This sequence of events, which made of 2002 one of the most remarkable years in recent Italian history, lends itself to a number of comments.

The first concerns numbers. At a time when mainstream sociological comment was insistent upon the essential and indeed 'permanent' apathy of the most developed contemporary societies, the numbers of people taking part in the Italian protests exceeded not only the wildest hopes of their organisers, but also those involved in Italy's previous mass protests, even during the Hot Autumn of workers' struggles in 1969–70. Another striking feature was the massive presence of educated middle-class protesters, enraged by Berlusconi's actions, but also increasingly impatient with the quality and leadership of the centre-left coalition. It was a Florentine university professor, Francesco 'Pancho' Pardi, a geographer, who denounced the Olive Tree leaders in Rome's Piazza Navona on 2 February 2002 for their mistakes in government and insipid opposition. When the same leaders went on with their prepared speeches as if he had never spoken, Nanni Moretti got up on the podium to make a memorable short speech, which concluded with the words, 'With this lot in charge, we shall never win an election again'. From that moment onwards, left-wing politics in Italy were not to be the same.

The Italian middle classes had long been denounced for their egoism and indifference. However, the monotony and predictability of such comments masked the emergence of a 'reflexive' middle class, concentrated for the most part in public services, in the lower ranks of the professions, in sections of the media and the 'new economy'. These members of the middle classes looked critically upon Italy's model of modernity, as well as the role ascribed to them within it.⁶⁷ They insisted instead, and with increasing vehemence, not only on the defence of democracy against the Berlusconi government, but also on its profound renewal. Throughout 2002 a significant number of them took as their themes not just the autonomy of the judiciary and pluralism of information, but also deliberative democracy, fair trade and responsible consumption, immigrant rights, a critique of the narcissism and careerism of much of the political class of the centre-left. Their protests took a number of forms: the most famous was that of the *girotondo*, in which demonstrators hold hands in a series of moving concentric circles to surround a public building or other objective. Law courts, television studios, other public buildings which needed to be symbolically protected, became the sites for such

⁶⁷ For further discussion of this theme and some European comparisons, Paul Ginsborg, *Italy and its Discontents*, London 2002, pp. 42–44, 66. See also the intense debate in Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernisation*, Cambridge 1994.

demonstrations. Other forms of organization included the founding of associations, networks and 'Laboratories for Democracy', of which the Florentine was the first and most influential. The eruption of this new, autonomous middle-class protest in Italian society has attracted the attention of a number of foreign observers.⁶⁸

Towards a new opposition?

We must be careful, in spite of the often innovatory aspects of the various parts of the protests of the last year, not to exaggerate their strength. The movement is quite patchy, with some parts of the country moving hardly at all. If Florence and Tuscany have formed an epicentre, Bologna and Emilia-Romagna have been less active than might have been expected. Northern cities once historic sites of left-wing elaboration and experiment, such as Turin, hardly stirred. In the South there has been some activity in Naples and Palermo, but vast parts of the southern provinces, as has so often happened in the past, have only been touched marginally. The trade-union component of the movement has had its own difficulties, because the more moderate unions, the CISL and UIL, have refused to follow the lead of the CGIL. That unity of the working-class movement, which was one of the most sought-after objectives of the Italian Left, and one of the most positive outcomes of the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, has receded into the distance. The activism of the new global movement, which through the city Social Forums has shown remarkable capacity for coordinating very disparate groups (Catholic, revolutionary socialist, trade union, environmentalist, etc.), continues unabated, though it has been difficult to maintain momentum after the European Social Forum in Florence. The peace movement, as is only natural, has come to occupy most of its attention and energy.

The wave of protests, involving overlapping groups of youth, trade unionists, 'reflexive' middle classes, has not yet found a satisfactory political outlet. The Left Democrats have spent the last year organizing debates about the relationship between the movement and the parties, without changing in any significant way their politics or mode of behaviour. Calls for primaries to decide party candidatures have been met with suspicion. Massimo D'Alema has consistently adopted a hostile and arrogant

⁶⁸ See, for instance, R. Arens, 'Italiens neue Apo' and 'Italiens Mitte bewegt sich doch', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 6 March 2002.

attitude towards the protests; many thousands of DS municipal, provincial and regional administrators, fearing their careers to be at stake, are firmly behind him. The internal opposition within the DS is too weak to claim the leadership. As for Rifondazione Comunista, it commands the enthusiastic support of part of the new global movement, but little else. Its leader, Fausto Bertinotti, did not waste a moment in condemning the new middle-class protests as 'petty-bourgeois', and subordinate in any case to the 'movement of movements'. Dogma dies hard.

The most popular figure on the Left is probably Sergio Cofferati, who recently left the CGIL at the end of his period of service as general secretary. He appears at this time attentive and respectful of all parts of Italian civil society, and interested in experimenting with new forms of collaboration between the movements and the centre-left political parties. His political loyalty is to the DS. The base of that party and indeed much of civil society is firmly set against the idea of founding yet another political formation. Cofferati himself would like to see a profoundly renovated DS as the major element in a new Olive Tree coalition. Yet it is difficult to see how such a project can triumph within the narrow and hostile confines of the existing party.

The Italian Left and the Olive Tree coalition thus remain uncertain and fissiparous, an inadequate political representation of the forces which mobilized during 2002. The impelling need to unite in order to defeat Berlusconi's coalition will undoubtedly generate some centripetal movement, and the prospect of Romano Prodi's leadership, once he returns from Brussels in 2004, is one that commands wide support. Yet centrifugal and warring forces remain more insidious and powerful. History is, unfortunately, on their side. Exceptional capacities of pragmatism and idealism, of ability to compromise as well as to mobilize, will be needed in the coming months. So far, they have been in scant evidence.

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FREDRIC JAMESON

FUTURE CITY

THE *PROJECT ON THE CITY* assembles research from an ongoing graduate seminar directed by Rem Koolhaas at the Harvard School of Design; its first two volumes—the *Great Leap Forward*, an exploration of the development of the Pearl River Delta between Hong Kong and Macao, and the *Guide to Shopping*—have just appeared in sumptuous editions, from Taschen.¹ These extraordinary volumes are utterly unlike anything else one can find in the print media; neither picture books nor illustrated text, they are in movement, like a CD ROM, and their statistics are visually beautiful, their images legible to a degree.

Although architecture is one of the few remaining arts in which the great *auteurs* still exist—and although Koolhaas is certainly one of those—the seminar which has produced its first results in these two volumes is not dedicated to architecture but rather to the exploration of the city today, in all its untheorized difference from the classical urban structure that existed at least up until World War II. Modern architecture has been bound up with questions of urbanism since its eighteenth and nineteenth century beginnings: Siegfried Giedion's modernist summa, *Space, Time and Architecture*, for example, begins with the Baroque restructuration of Rome by Sixtus V and ends with the Rockefeller Centre and Robert Moses's parkways, even though it is essentially a celebration of Le Corbusier. And obviously Le Corbusier was both an architect and, with the Radiant Cities, Chandigarh and the plan for Algiers, an 'urban planner'. But although the *Project* testifies to Koolhaas's commitment to the question of the city, he is not an urbanist in any disciplinary sense; nor can the word be used to describe these books, which also escape other disciplinary categories (such as sociology or economics) but might be said to be closest to cultural studies.

The fact is that traditional, or perhaps we might better say modernist, urbanism is at a dead end. Discussions about American traffic patterns or zoning—even political debates about homelessness and gentrification, or real-estate tax policy—pale into insignificance when we consider the immense expansion of what used to be called cities in the Third World: ‘in 2025,’ we are told in another Koolhaas collective volume, ‘the number of city-dwellers could reach 5 billion individuals . . . of the 33 megalopolises predicted in 2015, 27 will be located in the least developed countries, including 19 in Asia . . . Tokyo will be the only rich city to figure in the list of the 10 largest cities’.¹ Nor is this a problem to be solved, but rather a new reality to explore: which is, I take it, the mission of the *Project on the City*, two further volumes of which are so far projected: one on Lagos, Nigeria, and one on the classical Roman city as prototype.

Volume One of the *Project*, *Great Leap Forward*, interprets the prodigious building boom in China today—almost nine thousand high rises built in Shanghai since 1992—not so much in terms of some turn or return to capitalism, but rather in terms of Deng Xiaoping’s strategy to use capitalism to build a radically different society: *infrared* rather than *red*:

the concealment of Communist, red ideals . . . to save Utopia at a moment when it was being contested on all sides, when the world kept accumulating proofs of its ravages and miseries . . . INFRARED², the ideology of reform, is a campaign to preempt the demise of Utopia, a project to conceal 19th century ideals within the realities of the 21st century.

Those who believe that the market is a reality, anchored in nature and in Being, will have difficulty grasping such a proposition, which from their perspective will be dispelled either by an outright conversion to capitalism or by economic collapse. But consider the architectural perspective: we witness thousands upon thousands of buildings constructed or under construction which have no tenants, which could never be paid for under capitalist conditions, whose very existence cannot be justified by any market standards. We here follow the outlines of housing communities in the Pearl River Delta area which are being projected for a future quite unlike those researched by Western speculators or

¹ Chunhua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas and Sze Tsung Leong, eds, *Great Leap Forward*, Harvard Design School *Project on the City*, 722 pp, Cologne 2002; and *Guide to Shopping*, Harvard Design School *Project on the City*, 800 pp, Cologne 2002.

² *Mutations*, Barcelona 2001.

banks and funding institutions in the capitalist world. Indeed, the four communities explored here are something like four different Utopian projections: Shenzhen, a kind of alternate or double of Hong Kong; Dongguan, a pleasure city; Zhuhai, a golfing paradise; while the old centre, Guanzhou (Canton), becomes a kind of strange palimpsest, in which the new is superimposed on an already existing traditional economic centre. It is an extraordinary travelogue into the future, and gives a more concrete sense of China today and tomorrow than most guide-books (and many real tours).

Proteus goes shopping

The *Guide to Shopping* is something altogether different, both in style and intent. Consumption is, to be sure, a hot topic, but this is no conventional study of it. Indeed, the question of what this book is—an extraordinary picture book; a collection of essays on various urbanistic and commercial topics; a probe of global space from Europe to Singapore, from Disneyworld to Las Vegas; a study of the shopping mall itself, from its first ideologues all the way to its most contemporary forms—corresponds to the more general ambiguity of its object. Even if we stick to the initial characterization of that object as ‘shopping’, what kind of categorization is that? Is it a physical one, involving the objects to be sold? Is it psychological, involving the desire to buy the objects in question? Or architectural, having to do with the spatial originality of those malls—which, famously, trace their ancestry back to Walter Benjamin’s nineteenth-century arcades; if not, as some of the time charts in this book suggest, back to the 7000 BC ‘city of Catalhöyük founded for the trade of commodities’, or perhaps the ‘invention’ of the retail trade in Lydia in the seventh century BC? Or are we talking here about the globalization of consumption (consumerism)? Or the new trade routes and production and distribution networks involved in such globalization? (Or the businessmen who organize those?) And what about the new technologies evolved for commerce since Catalhöyük? The prodigious increase in size of the merchandizing companies and conglomerates, some of them larger than many foreign countries? What about shopping and the form of the contemporary city—if there is one: significantly Koolhaas’s collective project changed its name from the ‘Project for what used to be the city’ to the plainer and more optimistic *Project on the City*. To which may be added the question: is a new kind of space emerging—control space, junk space? And what does all this imply for the human psyche and human

reality itself? (The first theoretician of advertising, Edward Bernays, was Freud's nephew.) What does it imply for the future and for Utopia?

I am probably forgetting some of the other modulations of this protean topic; but it will be clear that it mobilizes, alongside the obvious (and obviously anticipated) areas of architecture and urbanism, such heterogeneous disciplines as psychoanalysis and geography, history and business, economics and engineering, biography, ecology, feminism, area studies, ideological analysis, classical studies, legal decisions, crisis theory, et cetera. Perhaps this kind of immense disciplinary range is no longer quite so astonishing in a postmodern era, in which the law of being is de-differentiation, and in which we are most interested in how things overlap and necessarily spill across the disciplinary boundaries. Or, if you prefer, in the postmodern the distinction between the old specialized disciplines is constitutively effaced and they now fold back on each other, in the most interesting studies—from Deleuze/Guattari's *Thousand Plateaux* to Caro's *Power Broker*; from *Empire* to *Rembrandt's Eyes*; from Benjamin's *Arcades* to the *Geschichte und Eigensinn* of Negt and Kluge; let alone *SMXLX* or even *Space, Time, and Architecture*. Theory is here mostly eschewed (although Baudrillard is mentioned once, I believe), but you must not let that tempt you into thinking that this is a non-theoretical piece of cultural journalism, let alone a coffee-table picture book. It is, as the enumeration above might also suggest, a collective volume; although not in the sense that experts of the various disciplines mentioned above are somehow judiciously assembled and their contributions sampled in turn. This makes it embarrassing for a reviewer to single out specific names, although Sze Tsung Leong has the most, and also the most philosophically reflective, chapters, with Chuihua Judy Chung a close follow-up for more concrete discussions. As for Koolhaas, his role seems to have been mostly organizational (that is to say, like certain versions of the deity, nowhere and everywhere all at once) save for an astonishing appearance in his own name, which will be discussed at the proper moment.

After the mall

I will try to put the theory back into all this; but it would first be better to work through some of the detail of the layers or strata of the book, whose alphabetical table of contents is quite misleading in this respect; and thus a veritable *tour de force* in its own right. For a few previews

on the mall are the way in here: they will return, far more developed, in a variety of contexts later on. But it is as though the shopping mall is the spatial and architectural wedge into this immense topic. Few forms have been so distinctively new and so distinctively American, and late-capitalist, as this innovation, whose emergence can be dated: 1956; whose relationship to the well-known decay-of-the-inner-city-rise-of-the-suburb is palpable, if variable; whose genealogy now opens up a physical and spatial prehistory of shopping in a way that was previously inconceivable; and whose spread all over the world can serve as something of an epidemiological map of Americanization, or postmodernization, or globalization. So the mall focuses the inquiry and serves as the frame for the prodigious enlargement of all this later on. Meanwhile, pages of chronologies, colour-coded cross-referencing systems and innumerable thematic indexes already train us in the rhizomatic form of that enlargement; while a first set of comparisons between retail areas all over the world, and between national GDPs and retail revenues of the top corporations, help us begin to map the process in our minds and to form a picture, not only of the relative hierarchies of globalization, but also of a view of 'shopping' that will shortly become, dare I say, not merely a political but also a metaphysical issue.

At once, however, we are pulled up short, and a fundamental difference between this work and the proliferation of new and excellent cultural-studies volumes on shopping, malls, consumption and the like, becomes clear. Before we even get to the thing itself, we come upon the mall in crisis, losing money and tenants, and on the verge of replacement . . . by what? Benjamin took his snapshot of the nineteenth-century arcade at the moment of its decay—and thereby developed a whole theory about history: that you could best understand the present from the standpoint of an immediate past whose fashions were already just a little out of date. Crisis puts us on notice that we have here to do, not merely with the archeology or prehistory of shopping, nor even its present but rather its future. Whatever the future of the mall as such, however, "there's lots of trash out there". Many cavernous old malls are dinosaurs that can't compete with the convenience of drive-up value retailers in power centres or strips—to which one now needs no doubt to add eBay.

Something has evidently happened to the preconditions for the existence of malls in the first place. But what were those preconditions? As in Aristotelian causality, they come in a variety of forms and shapes:

the physical or engineering preconditions are staged for us at once, in the very first letter of this ABC of shopping: namely, air-conditioning—to which we will return shortly in a more appropriate place. As for the pre-history, we have certainly been treated, in recent years, to a host of interesting predecessor forms, if not generally going as far back as Catalhöyük. Most notably the arcade itself, essentially developing in the early nineteenth century and reaching its crisis in the 1850s and 60s—exactly the moment when the next form comes along: the modern department store, whose emergence Zola immortalized in *Au bonheur des dames* (*Ladies' Delight* is a fictionalized version of real-life names like *Au printemps* and *La Samaritaine*, which have also been exhaustively studied in recent years, for their urbanistic as much as their commercial consequences: for one thing, they are roughly contemporaneous with Haussman's immense transformation of Paris). As for our form—now falling into decay in its turn?—we will come to it in a moment; indeed we will even put names and faces to it. Like a novel or a poem, it actually has an inventor or author, although the inventor of a whole genre is a more appropriate parallel; something one does not come across very often.

Delirious technologies

First, we leap ahead to measure the scope and transformations of this protean form—into airports, for example, which have now, all the new ones, also become shopping malls; into museums; finally into the city itself. The older city centre—blighted by suburbs and the new supermarkets, and then the malls themselves—now, with postmodernity and gentrification, catches up: not only by housing huge new malls within itself, but by becoming a virtual mall in its own right. Indeed, something fundamental begins to happen to it (as is fitting in a volume from the *Project on the City*):

In 1994 the mall officially replaced the civic functions of the traditional downtown. In a New Jersey Supreme Court case regarding the distribution of political leaflets in shopping malls the court declared that 'shopping malls have replaced the parks and squares that were "traditionally the home of free speech," siding with the protesters 'who had argued that a mall constitutes a modern-day Main Street'.

But if 'this return of shopping to the city has been nothing short of triumphant', the authors find themselves obliged to add: 'To be saved, downtowns have had to be given the suburban kiss of death'.

Back now to preconditions: could the bar code itself—the Universal Product Code—be one of these? Analyse its functions, and one begins to see how the statistics it immediately provides the retailer transform the whole structure of inventory, resupplying, marketing and the like. Brand names may well be more of a cultural consequence of this kind of shopping than a precondition, for their zones, the flagship boutiques, mark ‘the sacred precincts of the last global religion—capitalist consumerism’. They also underscore a new kind of dynamic, itself consumerized under the Singapore logo ‘co-opetition’, which celebrates the tide that lifts everybody’s boats, including those of the competitors.

But with this we are off on a tour of the world, or rather shopping’s world tour as it touches one spot after another and gets transformed by the local culture. Singapore is an old fascination of Koolhaas’s (see *SMLXL*), but its dynamics remain an extraordinary object lesson—not only in development, but also in the way in which a city-state fits first into the region and then into the world itself. The Crystal Palace takes us back to origins once again (and to the signature of an individual, Joseph Paxton). The Depato, or Japanese department store, flings us, if not into the future, then at least into an extraordinary cultural mutation, intimately connected with the logic of Tokyo’s growth along the various private railroad lines that fan out from the world’s third largest city. And finally: Disney himself. For no study of any innovations in this area can be complete without a comprehensive recognition of everything—all the various things, from a new urbanism to a new kind of shopping, a new kind of globalization, a new kind of entertainment industry, even a new kind of Utopia itself—that Walt invented. Indeed, perhaps Disney and Disneyfication is better studied in this new comparatist and globalized context than as a sport or typically American singleton.

But what about the mall itself, its space for example? There is a psychology of space in the mall—the patch, the corridor, the matrix—just as there is an ecology of the thing. And here the preconditions flow back in with a vengeance: not only air-conditioning and its very interesting history (more zany inventors and creative and obsessive dreamers); but also the escalator—the elevator had been a crucial operator in Koolhaas’s early book on the skyscraper landscape, *Delirious New York*—with its momentous consequences for shopping space and building possibilities; this whole rich section takes up some thirty pages. And also, somewhat later on, the skylight and the sprinkler system; not to speak of

the way the new space can hide its service systems out of sight—and not even to mention the precursor ‘technologies’: counter, display window, mirror and mannequin.

But let’s get on into the ideologies of the matter, for here at last we rise from the body to the soul: poor Jane Jacobs, for example, is cast as something of a Hegelian ruse of history in her own right for defending the fundamental features of a true city experience against the various urban and architectural modernisms, and thereby enumerating ‘the ingredients by which shopping could stand in for urbanity and creat[ing] a “city lite” that became the model for resuscitating America’s ailing downtowns’. This seems a little harsh, but it is certain that Jacobs—credited by many architects and urbanists as triggering the postmodern revolution in their field—is no anti-capitalist and lays a good deal of stress on (small) business.

But with Victor Gruen we are at origins (we can’t call it ‘ground zero’ any more; what about Harold-Bloomian genius?). For the mall was his brain-child, and it is certain that our experience of contemporary American space or non-space is to a certain degree disalienated by finding out that someone had the idea for all this, and that it is not just some weird accumulation of market-historical accidents but the result of human production. To stress Gruen’s achievement, however, is also at once to set off the canonical reaction and to recall, voluntarily or not, how few of the great modernists ever designed such things, let alone theorized them in the first place (whereas they have become a staple of the post-modernists). It is also to impose some reflexion on that contemporary *auteur* who is the garish or mass-cultural equivalent of all these loftier aesthetic projects, and a true phenomenon in his own right: Jon Jerde, builder of Horton Plaza in San Diego and much else. The high art/mass culture split becomes unavoidable here too, as much as in every other contemporary cultural field.

But just as we are about to reflect a bit on that, and to go on to other related global phenomena—the Lippo Group in Indonesia; a return to the old Venturi-Scott-Brown notion of ‘learning from Las Vegas’, and a rich interview with the authors; feminism too (women and shopping are an old and scurrilous topic); artificial landscapes; the relation of all this to psychology and psychoanalysis; the European resistance to the mall and its Americanizing consequences; and many other interesting topics

raised by the second half of the alphabet—suddenly we come upon a black hole, generating prodigious energies in all directions.

Down with the junkspace virus

It is Rem Koolhaas's contribution, 'Junkspace', an extraordinary piece of writing that is both a postmodern artefact in its own right, and—a whole new aesthetic perhaps? unless it is a whole new vision of history. In the light of this serried text, we must pause and rethink the entire project. But first we have to look at the writing itself, whose combination of revulsion and euphoria is unique to the postmodern in a number of instructive ways. We knew Koolhaas was an interesting writer—in this, comparable to any number of distinguished contemporary architects; his books, in particular *Delirious New York* and *SMLXL*, combining formal innovation with incisive sentences and characteristically provocative positions. But no single text in those books prepared us for this sustained and non-stop 'performance' of the built space, not just of the contemporary city, but of a whole universe on the point of fusing into a kind of all-purpose indeterminate magma.

This goes much further than the querulous culture-critical complaints about standardization (or Americanization). It starts with junk as the classical *remainder* (what is left over after the dialectic, or after your psychoanalytic cure): 'If space-junk is the human debris that litters the universe, junk-space is the residue mankind leaves on the planet'. Very soon, however, junkspace becomes a virus that spreads and proliferates throughout the macrocosm:

angular geometric remnants invading starry infinities; real space edited for smooth transmission in virtual space, crucial hinge in an infernal feedback loop . . . the vastness of Junkspace extended to the edges of the Big Bang.

But this by itself could be little more than Baudrillard or television theory—the critique of virtuality as a promise (like the passing critique of Deleuzian 'flows'): the point of the exercise is rather to find synonyms, hundreds upon hundreds of theoretical synonyms, hammered one upon the other and fused together into a massive and terrifying vision, each of the 'theories' of the 'postmodern' or the current age becoming metaphorical to the others in a single blinding glimpse into the underside:

Junkspace exposes what previous generations kept under wraps: structures emerge like springs from a mattress, exit stairs dangle in didactic trapeze,

probes thrust into space to deliver laboriously what is in fact omnipresent, free air, acres of glass hang from spidery cables, tautly stretched skins enclose flaccid non-events.

As a tendency, Junkspace has been around for some time, at first unrecognized; again, like a virus undetected:

Architects thought of Junkspace first and named it Megastructure, the final solution to transcend their huge impasse. Like multiple Babels, huge superstructures would last through eternity, teeming with impermanent subsystems that would mutate over time, beyond their control. In Junkspace, the tables are turned: it is subsystems only, without superstructure, orphaned particles in search of framework or pattern. All materialization is provisional: cutting, bending, tearing, coating; construction has acquired a new softness, like tailoring.

It would be too simple to say that architecture and space are here metaphors for everything else: but this is no longer architectural theory; nor is it a novel whose point of view is that of the architect. Rather it is the new language of space which is speaking through these self-replicating, self-perpetuating sentences, space itself become the dominant code or hegemonic language of the new moment of History—the last?—whose very raw material condemns it in its deterioration to extinction.

Aging in Junkspace is nonexistent or catastrophic; sometimes an entire Junkspace—a department store, a nightclub, a bachelor pad—turns into a slum overnight without warning; wattage diminishes imperceptibly, letters drop out of signs, air conditioning units start dripping, cracks appear as if from otherwise unregistered earthquakes; sections rot, are no longer viable, but remain joined to the flesh of the main body via gangrenous passages.

These alarming 'Alzheimer-like deteriorations' are realizations of the nightmare moments in Philip K. Dick, when reality begins to sag like a drug hallucination and to undergo vertiginous transmutations, revealing the private worlds in which we are trapped beyond time. But these moments are no longer terrifying; they are in fact by now rather exhilarating; and it is precisely this new euphoria that remains to be explained.

Empire of blur

To be sure, Koolhaas means no more than perpetual renovation, and not only the tearing down of the old but also the perpetual recycling to which the once noble (and even megalomaniacal) vocation of the Master Builder has been reduced: 'Anything stretched—limousines, body parts,

planes—turns into Junkspace, its original concept abused. Restore, rearrange, reassemble, revamp, renovate, revise, recover, redesign, return—the Parthenon marbles—redo, respect, rent: verbs that start with *re*—produce Junkspace'. This is the disappearance of all the 'originals' no doubt, but along with them, of History itself:

the only certainty is conversion—continuous—followed, in rare cases, by 'restoration', the process that claims ever new sections of history as Junkspace. History corrupts, absolute history corrupts absolutely. Colour and matter are eliminated from these bloodless grafts; the bland has become the only meeting ground for the old and the new.

We are henceforth in the realm of the formless (Rosalind Krauss, out of Bataille); but 'formlessness is still form, the formless also a typology'. It is not quite the 'anything goes' of the new generation of computer-generating 'blob architects' (Greg Lynn, Ben van Berkel): 'in fact, the secret of Junkspace is that it is both promiscuous *and* repressive: as the formless proliferates, the formal withers, and with it all rules, regulations, recourse'. Shades of Marcuse and repressive tolerance?

Junkspace is a Bermuda triangle of concepts, a petri dish abandoned: it cancels distinctions, undermines resolve, confuses intention with realization. It replaces hierarchy with accumulation, composition with addition. More and more, more is more. Junkspace is overripe and undernourishing at the same time, a colossal security blanket that covers the earth in a stranglehold of care . . . Junkspace is like being condemned to a perpetual Jacuzzi with millions of your best friends . . . A fuzzy empire of blur, it fuses high and low, public and private, straight and bent, bloated and starved to offer a seamless patchwork of the permanently disjointed.

There are no doubt still 'trajectories' with their magical moments:

Postmodernism adds a crumple-zone of viral *poché* that fractures and multiplies the endless frontline of display, a peristaltic shrink-wrap crucial to all commercial exchange. Trajectories are launched as ramp, turn horizontal without any warning, intersect, fold down, suddenly emerge on a vertiginous balcony above a large void. Fascism without dictator. From the sudden dead end where you were dropped by a monumental, granite staircase, an escalator takes you to an invisible destination, facing a provisional vista of plaster, inspired by forgettable sources.

There are also, in this churning pseudo-temporality of matter ceaselessly mutating all around us, moments of rare, of breathtaking beauty: 'railway stations unfold like iron butterflies, airports glisten like cyclopic dewdrops, bridges span often negligible banks like grotesquely enlarged

versions of the harp. 'To each rivulet its own Calatrava'. But such moments are scarcely enough to compensate for the nightmare, or to make the hallucinations all worthwhile. Cyberpunk seems to be a reference to grasp at here, which—like Koolhaas, only ambiguously cynical—seems positively to revel in its own (and its world's) excess. But cyberpunk is not really apocalyptic, and I think the better coordinate is Ballard, the Ballard of the multiple 'end-of-the-worlds', minus the Byronic melancholy and the rich orchestral pessimism and *Weltschmerz*.

For it is the end of the world that is in question here; and that could be exhilarating if apocalypse were the only way of imagining that world's disappearance (whether we have to do here with the bang or the whimper is not the interesting question). It is the old world that deserves the bile and the satire, this new one is merely its own self-effacement, and its slippage into what Dick called kipple or gubble, what LeGuin once described as the buildings 'melting. They were getting soggy and shaky, like jello left out in the sun. The corners had already run down the sides, leaving great creamy smears.' Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism. We can now revise that and witness the attempt to imagine capitalism by way of imagining the end of the world.

Breaking back into History

But I think it would be better to characterize all this in terms of History, a History that we cannot imagine except as ending, and whose future seems to be nothing but a monotonous repetition of what is already here. The problem is then how to locate radical difference; how to jumpstart the sense of history so that it begins again to transmit feeble signals of time, of otherness, of change, of Utopia. The problem to be solved is that of breaking out of the windless present of the postmodern back into real historical time, and a history made by human beings. I think this writing is a way of doing that or at least of trying to. Its science-fictionality derives from the secret method of this genre: which in the absence of a future focuses on a single baleful tendency, one that it expands and expands until the tendency itself becomes apocalyptic and explodes the world in which we are trapped into innumerable shards and atoms. The dystopian appearance is thus only the sharp edge inserted into the seamless Möbius strip of late capitalism, the punctum or perceptual obsession that sees one thread, any thread, through to its predictable end.

Yet this alone is not enough: a breaking of the sound barrier of History is to be achieved in a situation in which the historical imagination is paralysed and cocooned, as though by a predator's sting: no way to burst through into the future, to reconquer difference, let alone Utopia, except by writing yourself into it, but without turning back. It is the writing that is the battering ram, the delirious repetition that hammers away at this sameness running through all the forms of our existence (space, parking, shopping, working, eating, building) and pummels them into admitting their own standardized identity with each other, beyond colour, beyond texture, the formless blandness that is no longer even the plastic, vinyl or rubber of yesteryear. The sentences are the boom of this repetitive insistence, this pounding on the hollowness of space itself; and their energy now foretells the rush and the fresh air, the euphoria of a relief, an orgasmic breaking through into time and history again, into a concrete future.

Such is then the secret of this new symbolic form, which Koolhaas is not the only one of our contemporaries to mobilize (but few do it better). To come back now slowly, to reenter as in a decompression chamber the more prosaic world of shopping that was the takeoff point for this delirious adventure is also to search for the occasion, for what triggered it off, what provoked such a monumental and truly metaphysical reaction. It was in fact given to us early on, in an offhand sentence of Sze Tsung Leong, at the end of a more restrained and focused account of the commercial transformation of the globe which is, after all, the topic of the present volume: 'In the end, there will be little else for us to do but shop'. The world in which we were trapped is in fact a shopping mall; the windless closure is the underground network of tunnels hollowed out for the display of images. The virus ascribed to junkspace is in fact the virus of shopping itself; which, like Disneyfication, gradually spreads like a toxic moss across the known universe. But what is this shopping we have been on about for so long (and the authors even longer)?

Theoretically, it comes in many packages (and predictably we can shop around for our favourite theoretical version or brand-name). The tradition of Western Marxism called it 'commodification', and in that form the analysis goes back at least as far as Marx himself, in the famous opening chapter of *Capital* on commodity fetishism. The nineteenth-century religious perspective is Marx's way of foregrounding a specifically superstructural dimension in the market exchanges of capitalism. He

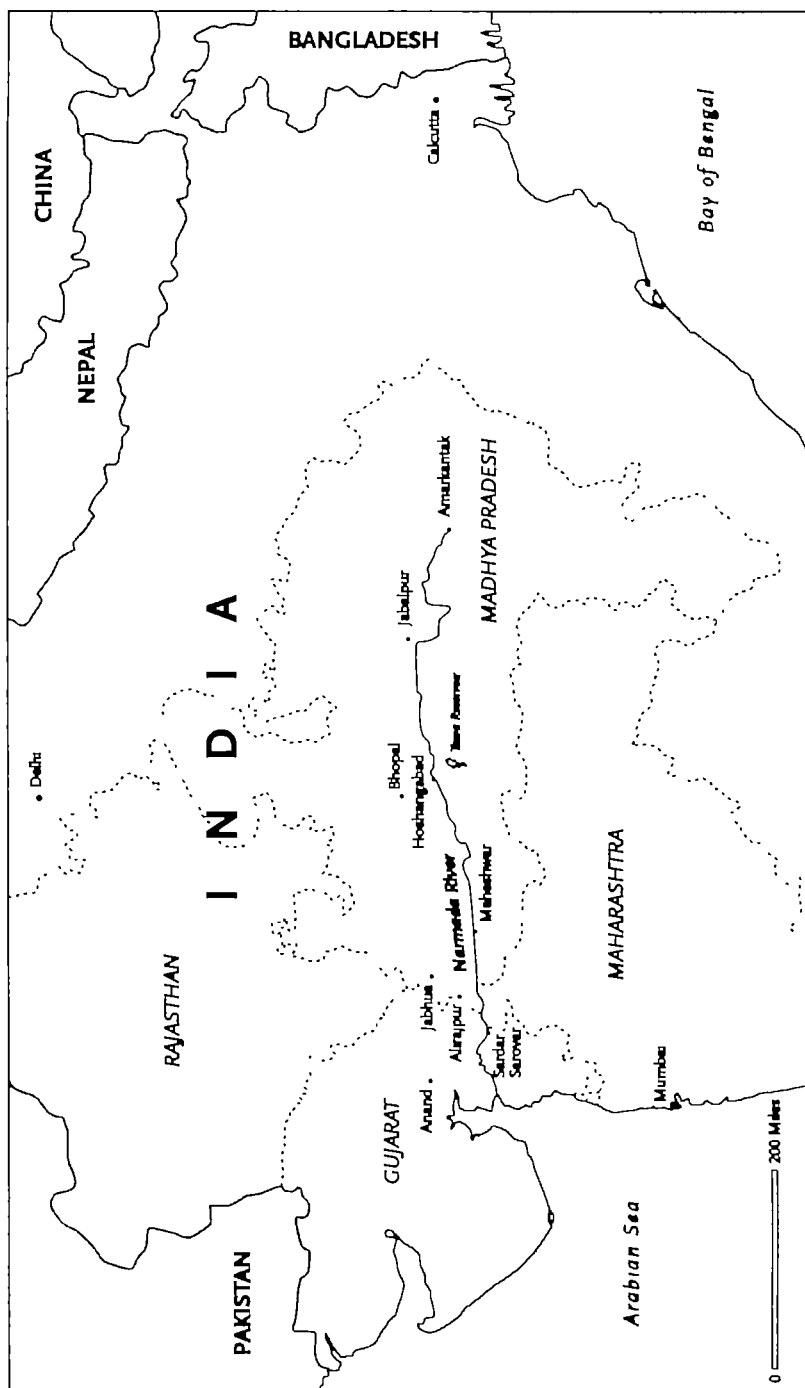
understood 'the metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties' of the commodity as the way in which the labour relationship is concealed from the buyer (the 'shopper?') and he thereby grasped commodification as an essentially ideological operation, a form of false consciousness which has the specific function of masking the production of value from the (bourgeois) consumer. Georg Lukács's philosophical classic, *History and Class Consciousness*, the inaugural text of so-called Western Marxism, develops this analysis on the larger plane of the history of philosophy itself, resituating commodification at the centre of the more general overall social process of mental as well as physical reification.

After World War II, however, the ideological orientation of this theme takes a somewhat different turn, at a moment when the sale of commodities and luxury items beyond those of simple subsistence or social reproduction becomes generalized throughout the increasingly more prosperous First World areas of Western Europe and the United States (and eventually Japan). At this point, the situationists and their theoretician Guy Debord invent a new perspective on commodification in their dictum that 'the final form of commodity fetishism is the image'. This is the takeoff point for their theory of so-called spectacle society, in which the former 'wealth of nations' is now grasped as 'an immense accumulation of spectacles'. With this perspective, we are much closer to our current assumptions (or *doxa*), namely that the commodification process is less a matter of false consciousness than of a whole new life style, which we call consumerism and which is comparable rather to an addiction than a philosophical error or even an ill-advised choice of political parties. This turn is part of the more contemporary view of culture as the very substance of everyday life (itself a relatively new postwar concept, pioneered by Henri Lefebvre).

The images of the *Guide to Shopping* are thus images of images, and should thereby enable a new kind of critical distance, something they do conceptually by returning the notion of the commodity to its original situation in the commercial exchange. What we do with commodities *qua* images, then, is not to look at them. The idea that we buy images is already a useful defamiliarization of the notion; but the characterization whereby we *shop* for images is even more useful, displacing the process onto a new form of desire and situating it well before the actual sale takes place—when, as is well known, we lose all interest in the object as such. As for consumption, it has been volatilized altogether in

this perspective; and, as Marx feared, has become altogether spiritual. Materiality is here a mere pretext for our exercise of the mental pleasures: what is any longer particularly material in the consumption of an expensive new car one drives around the local streets and has washed and polished as frequently as one can?

'In the end, there will be little else for us to do but shop'. Does this not reflect an extraordinary expansion of desire around the planet, and a whole new existential stance of those who can afford it and who now, long since familiar with both the meaninglessness of life and the impossibility of satisfaction, construct a life style in which a specific new organization of desire offers the consumption of just that impossibility and just that meaninglessness? Indeed, perhaps this is the right moment to return to the Pearl River Delta and Deng Xiaoping's post-modern socialism, in which 'getting rich' no longer means actually making the money, but rather constructing immense shopping malls—the secret of which lies in the fact that to shop does not require you to buy, and that the form of shopping is a performance which can be staged without money, just as long as its appropriate spaces, or in other words Junkspace, have been provided for it.



CHITTAROOPA PALIT

MONSOON RISINGS

Mega-Dam Resistance in the Narmada Valley

What were your family origins and early influences?

I WAS BORN IN 1964, to a middle-class Bengali family. My father was an engineer in the Indian Railways and my mother was a college lecturer. My father's work took us all over India, so I learnt early on about the country's extraordinary ecological and geographical variety, and how different communities, tribals and poor farmers, lived and worked. As a child I developed a strong sense of identification with the underprivileged—with the people who worked in our house and the children I played with in the railway colonies. Growing up, I also began to chafe against the confines of the typical feminine role. Love of literature—prose and poetry—opened my mind and made me something of a romantic; a streak that eventually pushed me towards work in the villages. But at Delhi University—I studied at Indraprastha College, a women's college there, from 1981 to 84—I read economics.

At the time I was a strong China fan, full of admiration for the Long March and Mao's dictums of 'going to the countryside' and 'living with the people'. I wasn't attracted to any of the left-affiliated student organizations though, because of their insistence on following the party line, which seemed to me antithetical to the freedom to think things through for oneself. So I stayed away from the Students' Federation of India—the student wing of the CPI(M), the largest left party—although many

of my friends were in it. But my incipient Maoism was undermined by 1989. I was deeply shocked at the Tiananmen Square massacre. It taught me to be a lot more cautious and reinforced my determination to work things through for myself. Mine was a rough-and-ready Marxism, more inspired by humanistic values and Marx's historical and early, idealistic writings than by his economic analysis, even though I was studying economics. Feminism had a more direct impact on me, partly because it is something you get involved in not individually but collectively, with other women. Groups like Saheli and the Boston Women's Collective, who held a workshop in Delhi, made me far more aware of my body and of sexual politics in general. It became an everyday question for me. Issues of human dignity—and the systems that deny it—seem even more important than questions of wages and material wellbeing. But it was the student environmentalist group, Kalpraviksh, which means the Tree of Imagination, that first exposed me to the Narmada Valley's concerns. In 1984 they produced a path-breaking report on the dam projects there.

After college I did a postgraduate course at the Institute of Rural Management in Anand, Gujarat, where there is a strong tradition of rural cooperatives. Then, with an NGO called Professional Assistance to Development Action, I worked for two years with women and children in the slums of Jabalpur, in Madhya Pradesh. I soon rejected the IRMA/PRADAN approach, however. They believed the only reason development was not working was the lack of professional input: if we provided this, poverty would magically vanish. It was an analysis that utterly failed to address questions of social structure or history. In 1988, I left to join a group called Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangat, the Organization for Awareness among Peasants and Workers, operating in the Narmada Valley tribal district of Jhabua, in Madhya Pradesh. The KMCs had been set up in 1982 and was mainly composed of young activists—architects, engineers and so on—who had rejected professional careers and were trying, in some small way, to contribute to social transformation.

Could you tell us about the Narmada Valley Development Project, and how the opposition to it started?

The Narmada River itself flows westwards across Central India over a course of some 800 miles, rising in the Maikal hills, near Amarkantak, and cutting down between the Vindhya and Satpura ranges to reach the

Arabian Sea at Baruch, 200 miles or so north of Mumbai. It is regarded as a goddess by many of those who live along its banks—the mere sight of its waters is supposed to wash one clean of sins. The Valley dwellers are adjured, once in their lifetime, to perform a *parikrama* along its course—walking up one side of the river to its source, and back down the other. The Narmada runs through three different states—Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat—and its social and physical geography is incredibly diverse. From the eastern hills it broadens out over wide alluvial plains between Jabalpur and Harda, where the villages are quite highly stratified and occupied by farming communities and fishermen. Between Harda and Omkareshwar, and again between Badwani and Tanchala, steep, forested hills close in once more, mainly inhabited by tribal or *adivasi* peoples—the Kols, Gonds, Korkus, Bhils and Bhilalas. On the plains, there are Gujars, Patidars, Bharuds and Sirwis, as well as Dalits and boat people—the Kewats, Kahars, Dhimars and others.

Although over 3,300 big dams have been built in India since Independence, the Narmada Valley Development is one of the largest projects of all, involving two multipurpose mega-dams—Sardar Sarovar, in Gujarat, and the Narmada Sagar, in Madhya Pradesh—that combine irrigation, power and flood-control functions; plus another 30 big dams and 135 medium-sized ones. The four state governments involved—the non-riparian Rajasthan as well as the other three—have seen the Narmada's waters simply as loot, to be divided among themselves. In 1979, the Dispute Tribunal that had been adjudicating between them announced its Award—18.25 million acre feet to Madhya Pradesh, 9 to Gujarat, 0.5 to Rajasthan and 0.25 to Maharashtra—and prescribed how high the dams must be to ensure this distribution. There was no question of discussing the matter with the communities that had lived along the river for centuries, let alone respecting their riparian rights.

Even before this, in the seventies, a Save the Soil campaign—*Mitti Bachao Abhiyan*—had arisen in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh, in response to the large-scale water-logging and salinization of the rich black earth around the Tawa dam, part of the NVDP. The protest was Gandhian and environmentalist in character but rooted in the farming communities of the area. In 1979 a huge though short-lived popular movement arose against the Narmada Award, led by mainstream politicians, many from the Madhya Pradesh Congress Party—including Shankar Dayal Sharma, a future president of India, who was jailed for

protesting against the height of the dam. But when they got into office, these leaders compromised completely, which led to much bitterness among the Valley communities and made it harder to start organizing from scratch again.

Nevertheless, by the mid-eighties there were several groups working in the Valley. In 1985, Medha Patkar and others formed the Narmada Ghati Dharangrast Samiti in Maharashtra, working with some thirty-three tribal villages at risk from the Sardar Sarovar dam. They demanded proper rehabilitation and the right to be informed about which areas were to be submerged. It was natural for them to link up with us in the KMCS, on the north bank of the river. There was also a Gandhian group called the Narmada Ghati Nav Nirman Samiti that worked in the villages of the Nimad plains in Madhya Pradesh. Their leader was a former state finance minister, Kashinath Trivedi. They undertook numerous 'long treks', or *padayatras*, to inform the villagers about the impact of the Sardar Sarovar dam, advocating an alternative 'small is beautiful' approach. The Jesuit fathers had also been doing ongoing work in the Gujarat area. The NBA—the Save Narmada Movement, or *Narmada Bachao Andolan*—emerged from the confluence of all these protests, though the name was only officially adopted after 1989. Medha Patkar played a central role in uniting these initiatives, across the three different states.

But though the Narmada movement started with protests around rehabilitation for the villagers affected by the Sardar Sarovar project, within three years it had become plain that they were facing a much greater problem. The Narmada Tribunal Award had specified that those displaced by the dams should be recompensed with land of equal extent and quality, preferably in the newly irrigated area—the command zone—before any submergence took place. By 1988, the villagers had learnt from their own bitter experience that there was no such land available. As the mass mobilization spread eastwards from Maharashtra to the tribal and plains villages of Madhya Pradesh, it became clear that this was going to be an even worse problem further upstream. There was growing anger at the complete denial of the villagers' right to information by the state and central governments, combined with a deepening awareness of the environmental destruction that was being planned—and of the existence of viable alternatives. During the summer of 1988 there was a tremendous churning of resistance, with a series of meetings and mass consultations. In August 1988 the NBA called a series

of simultaneous rallies in villages throughout the Valley, where the villagers proclaimed that they were no longer merely demanding proper rehabilitation—that they would fight the Sardar Sarovar dam itself.

Could you elaborate on the alternatives to the big-dam project, and the NBA's critique of the development paradigm?

We found that there were perfectly viable, decentralized methods of water-harvesting that could be used in the area. Tarun Bharat Sangh and Rajendra Singh of Rajasthan were able to revive long dried-up rivers in almost desert-like conditions by mobilizing local villagers' collective efforts to build tanks on a large scale. In Gujarat, remarkable pioneering work inspired by Prem Bhatia, Pandurang Athwale and Shyamji Antale has recharged thousands of wells and small water-harvesting structures using low-cost techniques. For a maximum cost of Rs. 10 million each—less than \$220,000—the problems of Gujarat's 9,000 water-scarce villages could largely be solved, with a total outlay of Rs. 90 billion, or \$1.9 billion. Whereas the official figure for the Sardar Sarovar dam alone—almost certainly an underestimate—is at least Rs. 200 billion, over \$4 billion.

Contrary to the Gujarat government's promises that Sardar Sarovar would provide for the state's two most drought-prone regions, Kutch and Saurashtra, we found that only 1.5 per cent of Kutch's total cultivable area was slated for the water, and only 7 per cent in Saurashtra. Most of it would go to the politically influential, water-rich areas of central Gujarat. Yet sugar mills were already being constructed in anticipation of water-guzzling sugarcane crops. Aqua parks and tourist resorts had also been planned; they and the urban centres would take the lion's share of the Narmada waters. The entire political economy of the dam project was beginning to unravel in front of us.

Huge multipurpose dams are full of contradictions. Their flood-control function demands that the reservoir be kept empty during the monsoon; yet irrigation requires stored water and, in turn, drains off the vast amounts required by hydroelectricity. Newly irrigated lands are often used to grow thirsty cash crops instead of traditional staples for direct consumption, leaving farming families at the mercy of the global market. There is also a huge ecological price to pay. In India, land irrigated by well water is twice as productive as that fed by canals—these

raise the water table excessively, causing water-logging and salinization. Up to a fifth of the world's irrigated land is salt-affected. Dams have also eliminated or endangered a fifth of the world's freshwater fish. The Land Acquisition Act of 1894, originally passed by the British, allows for the confiscation of properties on grounds of 'public interest'. The NBA challenges the Narmada land expropriations on the basis that the public interest clearly isn't served.

If you look at the various Narmada projects it's obvious that these aren't based on any real assessment of needs, nor even on an integrated view of the river valley. I doubt that the government has a consolidated map of all the command and submergence zones that have been planned. The entire approach has been fragmentary, based on a concept of impoundment. This is true not only of the Narmada dams but of many other such developments, including the Linking of Rivers Project that the BJP government is now pushing—an insane proposal, both socially and ecologically. It represents an intensification of the neoliberal programme of enclosing the commons: appropriating the rivers from the common people as a precursor to their takeover by global corporations for large-scale trade in water and energy markets. The NBA has opposed this destruction of forests and rivers, and the communities who have lived along their banks for centuries, in the name of 'development'. At village meetings sometimes 30,000 strong we've highlighted the role of the Indian state and private capital, domestic and foreign, in this process of commodifying public goods—asking who pays and who benefits. This won us new friends but also new enemies, since the elites who stood to gain from the dam began to target the NBA as 'anti-development'.

The NBA campaign famously forced the World Bank to withdraw from the Sardar Sarovar project. Can you describe how this momentum was built?

In 1985, when the central bureaucracy in Delhi began to raise questions about Sardar Sarovar, the World Bank stepped in with a \$450 million loan for the dam. The intervention made a nonsense of the Bank's customary defence for its funding of environmentally dubious projects—that these were matters upon which national governments must decide. The truth is that the Bank itself pushes for such projects and, in this instance, merely proposed 'better' rehabilitation policies. Though some NGOs worked with them to develop such practices for the oustees in Gujarat, the NBA refused to collaborate. The people of

the Valley suffered terribly under the terms of the World Bank loan. Before each installment was disbursed, the Bank demanded that certain conditions be met—specific villages evacuated, surveys completed, data gathered—and the state governments of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat translated this timetable into a series of brutal assaults, with police opening fire on NBA protesters, making numerous arrests and even attacking pregnant women. Every time a World Bank deadline loomed, we knew repression in the Valley would intensify.

By the late eighties the Bank was facing growing criticism over its support for dam construction—from the southern-based International Rivers Network, Brazilian protest groups and northern NGOs such as Friends of the Earth. Northern environmentalists lobbied their governments, questioning what the public money going to the World Bank was being used for. As the international movement developed, our resistance strengthened too. In 1990, a huge rally in Manibeli, Maharashtra—the first village due to be inundated by the Sardar Sarovar project—passed an ‘international declaration’ against the World Bank. The turning point came in 1991, when we launched a mass ‘struggle trek’, or *sangharsh yatra*, to Gujarat, to protest against the dam. Nearly 7,000 people walked in the bitter cold of winter. We were stopped at the state border, a place called Ferkuwa. The trekkers set up camp there and seven people, including Medha, went on an indefinite fast. It was at this point that the World Bank gave way, and agreed to an independent review on the Sardar Sarovar project—the first in its history.

The Review’s research team—led by Bradford Morse, a former UN Development Project head—spent a year and a half in India, travelling through the Valley and meeting everyone from bureaucrats to NGOs and villagers. Sometimes we resented their pointed questions, their whiteness, the fact that a team from the West could pass judgement on what was happening here. But the Morse Report, when it came out, was excellent. It argued that, given the lack of available agricultural land and political will, proper rehabilitation would be impossible; and that to push the project through in these circumstances would lead to an unmitigated disaster. Plans for Sardar Sarovar were fundamentally flawed on environmental and hydrological grounds, and its benefits had been greatly exaggerated. The World Bank was indicted for its self-deluding incrementalist approach—presuming that things would improve if it simply exerted more pressure. The Report’s level of scholarship was

outstanding, on a par with some of the treatises that early British scholars in India had written on forestry, tribes and so on.

The World Bank management responded by bringing out a document called 'The Next Steps'. This gave the Indian state six months to 'normalize' the situation, after which the Bank would take a final decision. We all knew this meant the repression would intensify. We were at a meeting in the tribal village of Kakrana, in Madhya Pradesh, when the news came through. The villagers laughed—they said that if they had been able to withstand the last ten years of brutality, the government was not going to succeed in the next six months. Sure enough, the officials and police we were supposed to be meeting with arrived within fifteen minutes of this discussion. They beat up and arrested several key activists from the area, myself included, and for the next four days subjected many of us to third-degree torture, with threats of electrocution. Over the next few months the repression escalated. There were mass arrests. Entire tribal villages, such as Anjanwada, were demolished. Homes and basic utensils were destroyed, seeds confiscated and so on. Their strategy failed. The villagers refused to relent and there were international protests against the treatment being meted out to the people of the Valley—which put even more pressure on the World Bank. In 1993 they announced they were withdrawing from the Sardar Sarovar project. The Morse Report had broken the back of the NVDP's legitimacy, though this did not stop the domestic repression. In reaction to the scrapping of the loan, the Maharashtra police opened fire on the protesters, killing a 16-year-old tribal boy, Rehmal Puniya.

A new phase began, with the NBA now face to face with the Indian state. In December 1994 we held yet another fast and month-long sit-in at Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. The government there at last agreed to stop construction and, since all three states had to operate consensually, work came to a halt in Gujarat and Maharashtra as well. We had also submitted a comprehensive petition on the Narmada issue to the Indian Supreme Court earlier that year. In May 1995, the Court called for an interim stay on any further construction at Sardar Sarovar, pending its final judgement. When that came, in 2000, it was a bad blow to the movement, but there is no doubt that the temporary respite offered much-needed relief to the Narmada Valley people, who were facing enormous repression at that time.

The NBA has also succeeded in forcing foreign capital to withdraw from another dam project, at Maheshwar. How did you achieve this? What general lessons would you draw?

When construction stopped on the Sardar Sarovar site, people came to seek the NBA's help against other dam projects in the Narmada Valley. By June 1997, we were organizing people against six or seven dams—people began to connect up and share their experiences, on a pan-Valley basis. One key battle was over the Maheshwar dam in Madhya Pradesh. In 1992, this had been the first hydro-power project to be privatized—handed over to S. Kumars, an Indian textile company with no record in energy production. In line with the neoliberal policies introduced by the Indian government in the early nineties, the company was guaranteed payment by Madhya Pradesh of Rs. 600 crores, or nearly \$130 million, over the next thirty-five years, whether any power was generated or not. Estimates for the project had increased five-fold by 1999, and the electricity it was set to produce had become prohibitively expensive—at least three times the cost of existing power. Meanwhile, the dam was slated to submerge or adversely affect the livelihoods of over 50,000 people in sixty-one villages. Again, the NBA argued that the project was flatly against the public interest.

Construction on the dam began in earnest in November 1997. On 11 January 1998, 24,000 people took over the Maheshwar site; thousands squatted there for the next 21 days, demanding a comprehensive review of the project, and five people went on a fast. With state elections looming, the Madhya Pradesh government agreed to halt building work and set up a Task Force to report on the dam; but as soon as the elections were over, they restarted construction. Thousands of people then re-occupied the site on two consecutive days in April 1998. We were tear-gassed and badly beaten up. More than a thousand were jailed. As we got to know the terrain better, we managed to take over the dam and stop work there eleven times over the next three years. S. Kumars and the state government responded by drafting in some 2,000 police, including paramilitaries.

In May 1998, we started another form of agitation, setting up 24-hour human barricades on the roads leading to the dam site, to stop the trucks that were delivering construction materials. Of course, we let through those with food for the workers, mostly bonded labourers from Andhra Pradesh and Orissa and themselves brutally exploited. The government,

initially non-plussed, responded by a cat-and-mouse strategy—every ten days they would send in a large police force to carry out mass arrests, often with a great deal of violence, and then push through a whole convoy of trucks while we were being held in custody. Though we could not stop all the material reaching the site, the barricades helped a lot to slow the pace of construction down. The protest also mobilized large numbers of people for months on end. The leading role of women in these actions—they braved hot summers and monsoons, kept vigil in the darkest of nights, suffered violent police beatings and brutal arrests—electrified the surrounding areas and put enormous pressure on the Madhya Pradesh government. But it was clear we were getting close to the limits of human endurance, so we shifted to another strategy: barricading the finances of the dam.

There were hugely lucrative opportunities for global capital when India's energy sector was thrown open for privatization in 1991. The initial plan for the Maheshwar dam project envisaged as much as 78 per cent of the finance coming from foreign sources. After failing to clinch deals with Bechtel and PacGen, S. Kumars found two German power utilities, *vew* Energie and Bayernwerk, to take 49 per cent of the equity; they were supposed to bring in tied loans to purchase, among other things, \$134.15 million's worth of electro-mechanical equipment from Siemens, with an export guarantee backed by the German government—underwritten, in other words, by public money. On the Indian side, again, this would be counter-guaranteed by more state funds. This is a weak point in the privatization strategies of global capital, the chink that leaves them open to popular intervention and interrogation—not only because the use of public money creates a potential space for democratic control, but because it exposes the contradictions of corporate globalization: the absence of the 'free-market competition' and 'risk-taking' that are supposed to be the virtues of private entrepreneurship.

In April 1999, the villagers affected by the Maheshwar dam set out on a month-long demonstration and indefinite fast at Bhopal. After twenty-one days of this, Bayernwerk and *vew* withdrew from the project, with Bayernwerk citing the lack of land-based rehabilitation as a major concern. In March 2000, Ogden Energy—a US power company, part of the corporate entourage of President Clinton when he visited India that spring—agreed to take over the Germans' 49 per cent stake. Over the next few months, we mounted a struggle on all fronts, involving public

actions in both Germany and the us. In Germany, the campaign was led by the ngo Urgewald, run by Heffa Schücking, who succeeded in making the export guarantee for Maheshwar a major issue for the SPD-Green government. In the us, protests were mounted by the Indian diaspora, particularly students, and by groups like the International Rivers Network. We also held big demonstrations outside the German and American embassies in New Delhi. The result was that, after carrying out their own field survey, the German government refused an export guarantee for Siemens, who subsequently withdrew. In a parallel move, the Portuguese government vetoed a guarantee for Alstom-ABB's power equipment. The Maharashtra government, meanwhile, had reneged on an earlier agreement with Enron and, in light of all this, in 2001 Ogden Energy pulled out of the Maheshwar project too.

After the foreign corporations withdrew, S. Kumars tried to carry on with funds from state institutions—even though privatization had been justified in the first place on the grounds that insufficient public money was available. So in May 2002, the NBA took the struggle to the glass-fronted banks and financial corporations in Mumbai, combining dialogue with coordinated mass protests. We compiled a list of serious financial irregularities in S. Kumars' use of public money. The company got an *ex-parte* gagging order against the NBA, preventing us from organizing mass protests or putting out 'defamatory' press releases. But the publicity stopped the dribble of public funding that was keeping the Maheshwar project alive. All construction work came to a halt and, on 20 December 2002, the project's 'movable and immovable' properties were impounded by one of the state financial institutions that had been backing it.

We learnt a lot about the structures and processes of globalization through these struggles—and about the need for global alliances from below, to confront it. But though international political factors—the character of the governments involved, the existence of able support groups in the North—play an important part, they cannot supplant the role of a mass movement struggling on the ground. Soon after the SPD government in Berlin refused a guarantee to Siemens for Maheshwar, it agreed to underwrite the company's involvement in the Tehri dam in the Himalayas and the catastrophic Three Gorges Dam in China—both just as destructive as the Narmada project; but in neither instance were there strong mass struggles on the ground. We never thought, when we began the struggle against the Maheshwar project, that it would become such a

full-fledged battle against corporate globalization and privatization. One important outcome was that we found allies in other women's groups, trade unions and left parties, who had not participated as vigorously in our earlier protests.

What role have women played in the struggle?

On 8 March 1998 we set up a separate women's organization within the NBA—the Narmada Shakti Dal. Some two thirds of those on the dam barricades and occupations at Maheshwar were peasant women, and they also played an important role in the core decision-making group. In fact, we found that the choices that had to be made in order to sustain such a relentless struggle, in the face of growing exhaustion and terrible odds, could only be made because of the participation of women. They proved far more radical and militant than the men, and capable of more imaginative protests.

Peasant women were to the Maheshwar struggle what tribals were to Sardar Sarovar. They could give a moral leadership, firstly because their distance from the market meant that they never saw the land and the river—which they worshipped as a mother—as commodities that could be sold for cash. S. Kumars and the central government offered high levels of compensation when critical reports went against them, and that naturally attracted some of the families. But the majority refused to accept the compensation, basically because the women did not want to swap their lands for money and were prepared to fight for that position in their communities, and often in their own households. Villages like Behgaon saw the emergence of a strong women's leadership, and standoffs within families as women pitted themselves against the men's willingness to take the money. The women prevailed and the unity of the village was preserved, at some small cost.

Secondly, the women's relative exclusion from the political system meant that their minds had not been colonized by mainstream party ideologies—they hadn't been deluded into construing their own destruction as 'development'. Nor did the power of the state leave them cynical or demoralized. Their imaginative approach kept opening up unexpected forms of struggle. For example, in January 2000, several thousand of us once again occupied the dam site. We were arrested and taken to Maheshwar jail. The authorities wanted to release us immediately but

the women spontaneously refused to leave the prison until our questions had been answered. How much would the electricity from the new dam cost, compared to existing power sources? Where was the alternative agricultural land for the affected people? How much water-logging would there be in the surrounding region? How could the state government justify its huge buy-back guarantees, which protected private promoters with public funds regardless of whether any power was produced? For the next three days we locked ourselves in, while the prison wardens fled. So although we had no illusions about negotiating with the Madhya Pradesh government, we were able to establish a much broader critical consciousness about the Maheshwar project through our repeated protests and pointed questions—even among those who were in favour of more electricity.

What lessons would you draw from the NBA's experience with the Indian Supreme Court? In retrospect, do you think it was a mistake to adopt a legal approach?

Firstly, the NBA never relied entirely on a legal strategy. We always kept up a process of direct action too. For example, every year since 1991 we've organized a monsoon *satyagraha*—'urging the truth', in the Gandhian sense—in which people bodily confront the rising waters of the reservoirs, standing waist deep. Secondly, in answer to your question: no, I don't believe we made a mistake in taking the issue to the courts in 1994. We can't completely dismiss the judiciary as a ruling-class institution—it represents a contested space and, like every other space in a democracy, people have to fight to retrieve it from the elites.

Nevertheless, when we submitted our petition on the Narmada Valley project in 1994, it was to a Supreme Court substantially different from the one that delivered the final verdict in 2000. Personnel apart, the shifting political climate of the nineties has been reflected in the higher echelons of the Indian legal system. The more activist judiciary of the previous decades—which allowed for a tradition of public-interest litigation that gave access to the poor and dispossessed—has reinvented itself, and produced a string of notorious judgements over the last two years. We have seriously underestimated the extent to which our democratic institutions—the judiciary included—have been reshaped, over the past two decades, by the processes of neoliberal globalization. If these have worked, at the micro-level, by a system of incentives and rewards, they

have also succeeded in imposing a larger ideological framework in which any obstacle to capital's search for super-profits—whether popular movements, environmental considerations or concerns about people's livelihood—is seen as a constraint that has to be removed. What better way to do this than through the judiciary, whose verdicts are presumed to be just and impartial, and therefore beyond criticism?

Still, the final Supreme Court ruling on our petition in 2000 came as a shock. The majority judgement argued specifically that large dams served the public interest, at the expense of only a small minority; it completely dismissed the environmental issues. In a step back from the 1979 Narmada Award, it permitted construction to proceed before people had been rehabilitated. The judges made a few trivial recommendations for improvements to existing rehabilitation sites—more swings for the children, for instance—and then ruled that the height of the Sardar Sarovar dam wall could be raised first by two metres and then by five.

For the few of us who had stayed on in Delhi to hear the Supreme Court decision, those five metres were far more than an abstract figure. The reservoir would now engulf the *adivasi* area that had lain just above the submergence level for a number of years and whose people had not been rehabilitated. We were really shocked that the judiciary—that pillar of democracy—had betrayed us. The press called us repeatedly in the evening for our comments and all we could say was that the people of the Valley would meet to decide on what to do next. Then, almost immediately, there was a TV report saying that 4,000 people had already gathered in the Narmada Valley to condemn the judgement and to decide on its implications in a united manner, 'from Jalsindhi to Jalkothi'. We couldn't understand how they could have mobilized so quickly, but it turned out that the Maheshwar project villagers had occupied the dam site that afternoon anyway, in one of their many guerrilla actions. As soon as they heard about the Sardar Sarovar decision they sent out a press release, pledging their solidarity with the people there.

Two days later we had a meeting at Anjanwada, where the tribals of Alirajpur had assembled, as they were gathering elsewhere in the Valley. I was in such a deep depression I could hardly speak—it was like announcing a death sentence. Someone broke the ice by saying what we all already knew: that the Supreme Court had permitted a five-metre increase, on the basis of claims by the Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh

and Central governments that adequate alternative land was available. Everyone began talking at once and within a few minutes the meeting had made its decision, without any disagreement: firstly, we would show those in power that we weren't mice, to be flooded out; and secondly, that we would expose the governments' land claims as false. Late that night, one of the tribal activists woke me up, one who had shared our faith in democratic structures. What happened, he asked, how could they give such a judgement? Was the fact that there was no land for our rehabilitation not clear to them? But the *adivasis* were up early the next morning, as always, laughing their inexplicable early morning laughter, displaying their characteristic mixture of stoicism and balance.

How are decisions of this sort normally taken within the NBA? How would you describe the movement's internal structures?

In the Valley itself there are two independent centres where decision-making takes place, one in the Sardar Sarovar region and another for the Maan and Maheshwar struggles; both bring together the organic village leaderships in those areas, plus a few urban activists. Also, because the NBA is spread across three different states, a loose network is necessary, coordinated by meetings at several levels. Resistance to the dams project is predicated as a matter of survival—of life or death—for the communities of the Narmada Valley. One of the first slogans was 'Nobody will move, the dam will not be built'—*koi nahi hatega, bandh nahi banega*. When the waters began to rise, the people came up with another chant, 'We will drown, but we will not move'—*doobenge, par hatenge nahi*. Such positions have to be based on mass support and participation, rather than minority activist structures.

The rhythm of activism is also dictated by the pattern of the seasons. Every monsoon, as the people of the Valley face the rising waters, we hold a mass meeting. People from the various villages affected will come together for a whole day, sometimes two, to discuss the situation. How much submergence will take place, and how might it best be confronted? If the dam wall has been increased over the last year, what are the implications? What forms of resistance are most appropriate for each *satyagraha*? How should the logistics of wood, water, grain and transport be managed, in the context of the rising reservoir? Most of the time, we are fighting with our backs against the wall and we often have only a certain number of options to choose from—state officials to

confront, buildings to occupy, sympathetic supporters to call on, and so forth. So the range of disagreement is limited and, in practice, there is a great deal of consensus about these decisions.

After each set of meetings we hold a collective consultation, in which representatives from the different regions come together to work out broader strategies for calling attention to the distress and struggle of the Valley people. Further discussion takes place on the Coordination Committee, the *samanvaya samiti*, comprised of intellectuals and activists from outside the movement who contribute to forging wider links. Ground-level resistance needs to be supported by legal initiatives and media campaigns, and by alliances at national and international levels. The NBA's attempt to question the development paradigm, for example, has involved taking the debate to the Indian middle classes, who are among the strongest supporters of the Narmada Valley project. We currently have some sixty urban support centres, in cities all over India. There have been periods over the last decade when these structures have broken down or fallen into disuse; but it is clear to us that, without widespread consultation at many levels, both inside and outside the movement, sustained collective action would be impossible.

Often, as on the question of what general course to take after the Supreme Court judgement, decisions are swift, consensual and to the point—reactions in other tribal areas were very similar, in that instance. But sometimes we cannot reach a consensus. For example, one senior activist wanted to respond to that crushing final verdict by 'immersion', or *jal samarpan*—where one remains motionless in the face of the incoming waters, up to death. This was hotly debated and opposed among the Valley people and their supporters—a stance that has so far prevented such a tactic from being deployed. In good times, we don't require formal structures, elected representatives, articulated organizational principles. But in times of crisis or vacuum, when everything else has collapsed, we see the need for them.

Can you describe some of your methods of struggle? How central is non-violence to NBA philosophy—and how frustrating has this been, in the face of state repression?

The main forms of mass struggle in the Valley have been non-violent direct actions—marches, *satyagraha* and civil disobedience. In Sardar

Sarovar, for example, in the aftermath of Ferkuwa, hundreds of villages refused to allow any government official to enter. In Maheshwar those affected by the dam have repeatedly occupied the site in the face of police repression. Other forms of *satyagraha* have involved people staying in their villages despite imminent submergence, or indefinite fasting to arouse the public conscience. State repression and indifference have often left us feeling frustrated and helpless, but I don't see that as a failure of our tactics. In an increasingly globalized world, we have to search for richer and more compelling strategies; but that does not mean compromising on the principle of non-violence, which remains fundamental for the NBA. If we fight for the inalienable right to life, and insist that such concerns should form the basis for assessing any development paradigm, how can we resort to violence? There have been a few unplanned incidents involving self-defence that cannot count as non-violent; situations where people have been pushed beyond the edge. But as a strategy, how could physical violence on our part ever match the armed might of the Indian state, or of imperialist globalization? Most importantly, only a non-violent struggle can provide the silence in which the questions we are asking can be heard. A strategy of violence results in a very different kind of political discourse.

But don't activists put their own lives at risk, through fasting and submergence?

The monsoon *satyagrahas*—where people in their hundreds stand ready to face the waters that enter their homes and fields—have to be distinguished from the practice of immersion, or *jal samarpan*. *Satyagraha* means more than putting pressure on the state—it is also a way of bearing witness to what the state is doing to the people. It affirms the existence of the Valley inhabitants and shows our solidarity. It makes a moral point, contrasting the violence of the development project with the determination of those who stand in its path. In most of the monsoon *satyagrahas* where the waters have actually flooded the houses—as in Domkhedi over the last two or three years—the police have physically dragged people out of the areas being inundated, in an attempt to rob the agitation of its symbolic power. As I have said, many of us are very critical of such methods as *jal samarpan*. We need to be alive to fight. We also need to assess whether the state can twist the issue to its own advantage by claiming that, since we are not willing to be rehabilitated, it is the protesters' own fault if we drown. Fasting is more gradual and

allows us time to awaken the public conscience. But if you use the same weapons again and again they become blunt and ineffective.

Many in the Valley now advocate seizing federal land in Madhya Pradesh for self-settlement, and as a way to expose the government. Two and a half thousand acres belong to a state farm, which the Asian Development Bank has recommended should be hived off—it may go to one of India's biggest conglomerates. So there seems to be land for corporations but none for the millions whose homes have been taken away from them in the name of the 'public interest'. Not a single person in Madhya Pradesh has been given the legally required equivalent for his land. The record is also very poor in the other two states. They say 4,000 families are being rehabilitated in Gujarat and 6,000 in Maharashtra. But there are 25 million in the Valley whose lives will be adversely affected in some way and at least 500,000 displaced by direct submergence.

How does the NBA raise its money?

Almost 40 per cent of NBA funds come from the farmers of Nimad—the relatively wealthy plains area of the Narmada Valley. After the wheat harvest, each farmer contributes a kilogram per quintal produced and there are small cash donations after the cotton harvest, too; though their prosperity is now seriously threatened by the wro. The other 60 per cent comes from our urban supporters. Several prominent Indian artists have contributed their works to the movement, and Arundhati Roy has consistently supported us through her writings; she donated her entire Booker Prize winnings to us, three years back, and has contributed generously every year since.

We decided very early on that we would take neither government grants—why should they pay for direct opposition to their policies?—nor foreign money, save for travel costs and local hospitality when we're invited to speak. Foreign donations would expose us to all kinds of questions about the autonomy of the movement; it would also allow the Indian government to exercise some control over us, since such finance has to be routed through the External Affairs Ministry. Of course, we defend our right to call for international solidarity; but we also believe that it is possible for the resources of Indian civil society to sustain popular struggles—and that to do so builds and affirms support for the movement.

Gujarat has been the most communally polarized of Indian states—the laboratory of Hindutva forces where, in the wake of the most brutal and deliberate anti-Muslim pogrom since Independence, the BJP has been returned to power with its greatest ever majority, over two-thirds of the vote. Is there a connexion between Gujarati communalization and the opposition of large sections of the population, especially its upper-caste, middle-class layers, to the NBA?

This is a real problem in Gujarat. A change took place in the political complexion of the state during the eighties. Middle and upper castes came to power after the break-up of the lower-caste alliance of KHAM, which had previously held sway in electoral politics—composed of kshatriyas, who are not upper castes in Gujarat, harijans, adivasis and Muslims. This new elite is far more communalized and lumpen than other sections of society. There is a lesson here for people's movements like the NBA. In spite of our work among tribals, we failed to take as seriously as we should have the issue of communalism, and the grassroots influence of the Right. The Sangh Parivar's continuous mobilization among tribals over the last two decades has yielded them a rich—for the others, a bitter—harvest of hate. This was happening all around us, but we never fully assessed the Sangh's destructive potential and failed to counter them. Why? I feel the problem lies in a seeming inability to offer our own holistic political philosophy as a consistent alternative.

At a certain point in the nineties, the NBA sought to move in the direction of developing such a holistic agenda, connecting issues of communalism, militarization, neoliberal globalization. Was there a gap between intentions and outcomes? Where does the NBA go from here?

I must confess that the NBA as a collective entity has not yet sat down and thrashed these matters out. We have taken some initiatives on these issues—international questions, anti-globalization struggles—but we urgently require a more concrete and coherent agenda, a collectively evolved action plan. In any case, there is no possibility of addressing these points on our own, without a wider alliance of movements. Since 1994, the NBA has been working with the National Alliance of People's Movements, of which Medha Patkar is the national convenor. The NAPM has three broad currents: Gandhians, Indian Social Democrats—to the left of Euro-socialism, but unsympathetic to the official Communist parties—and people's organizations from various backgrounds, including Marxist. In Madhya Pradesh, the NBA is also part

of the broad front of the Jan Sangarsh Morcha, which brings together numerous progressive organizations to challenge the World Bank and Asian Development Bank on issues such as energy, forestry and the dismantling of the public sector. But both the NAPM and JSM are at the embryonic stage—it remains to be seen whether they can combat the bankruptcy of the country's existing political structures or solve the social and ideological crisis it confronts.

Yet the real challenge is to begin from where we are, with our own constituencies. If we work only at the state or national levels, there is a real danger of losing the organic leaders who have emerged from the Narmada movement and form our real strength. There are hundreds of capable tribals, women, fisherfolk, with high levels of consciousness—the outcome of sixteen years of collective resistance. The real success of our struggle lies not only in stopping dams but in enabling such leaders to play a guiding role in broader struggles, not just against displacement, but against corporate globalization and communalism: to lead the defence of democracy in this country, and shape its economic and political future. It is the marginalized people of the Narmada Valley who know the system at its worst, and have some of the richest experiences in struggling against it. Their lives and tragedies have made them both sensitive to what is needed in the long term and courageous in their willingness to undergo whatever sacrifices prove necessary for prolonged resistance.

Chittaroopa Palit was interviewed for NLR by Achin Vanalk, visiting professor of political science at Delhi University, author of *The Furies of Indian Communalism* (1997) and co-author of *South Asia on a Short Fuse* (1999). He would like to thank Arundhati Roy and Sanjay Kak for their help.

GREGORY WILPERT

COLLISION IN VENEZUELA

FEW CONTEMPORARY political upheavals have been as dramatic as the events that have convulsed Venezuela in the past five years. In 1998, former paratroop colonel Hugo Chávez was elected President by a landslide majority, on a platform calling for a fundamental reconstruction of the whole political framework of the country. Within two years, he successfully pushed through an ambitious new Constitution, and was reelected President for six more years, equipped with an even larger majority—some 60 per cent of the vote—and a Congress dominated by his supporters. By the autumn of 2000, the country seemed to be at his feet.¹ Eighteen months later, he faced a general strike and massive street demonstrations against his rule, swiftly followed by a military coup that deposed and imprisoned him. Despite being restored to power by popular counter-demonstrations and a revolt against his ouster originating within the armed forces themselves, Chávez was under siege again in less than a year.

This time he confronted the largest and longest employer/trade-union confederation strike in Latin American history, mobilizing virtually the entire mass media and a galvanized middle class that proved capable of remarkable—even sacrificial—levels of militant collective action, backed by a wide spectrum of senior commanders. Lasting from 2 December 2002 to 2 February 2003, this vast battering-ram paralysed Venezuela's oil industry, its key economic sector, for seven weeks, leading to widespread expectations of the final demise of Chávez's meteoric Presidency. But once again his popular and military support held firm, and after inflicting savage blows to the state's finances, the strike collapsed. The opposition *frontera* has by no means given up its aim of driving Chávez

from office, but for the moment he sits more securely in the Miraflores Palace than for many months.

Opposition charges

What lies behind this extraordinary sequel of events? Why has Venezuela been close to civil war for the past two years? The 'Democratic Coordination' that has spearheaded successive swarming assaults on the President leaves no doubt of its vision of the dangers facing the country. Chávez threatens its people with 'Castro-Communism', a totalitarian dictatorship that has trampled on human rights and brought Venezuelans to the brink of ruin. Milder versions of the same general conception form the standard image of Chávez's regime purveyed by the international media at large. No matter how often they are repeated, these charges are quite spurious. Under Chávez's rule, there are no political prisoners, and there is no censorship. Citizens enjoy nearly total freedom of assembly: demonstrations blocking important installations or freeways are treated far more leniently than under most US city governments. The mass media pour out attacks against the government on a round-the-clock basis, of a virulence unthinkable in Europe or North America.

If some members of the Bolivarian Circles supporting Chávez in the shanty-towns are armed, the great majority are harmlessly engaged in community projects: the number of households possessing handguns is just as high in the middle as in the popular classes. Political violence, when it has broken out during demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, has been on a relatively small scale, with no one side clearly to blame. Congress meets freely, the opposition speaks openly, parties and movements organize actively. Neither legislature—where Chávez no longer has a secure majority—nor judiciary are controlled by the executive. Such is the totalitarian panorama of Venezuela today.

Chávez is also charged with plunging the country by reckless policies into a steep economic decline. In fact, on coming to power in 1998 his macroeconomic course was quite orthodox—he even retained his predecessor's Finance Minister. The price of oil was at an all-time low and the economy contracted during his first year in office. However,

¹ For the rise of Chávez, see the vivid account in Richard Gott, *In The Shadow of the Liberator*, London 2000.

during his second and third years, as oil prices recovered, the economy did reasonably well, expanding by 3.2 and 2.8 per cent, while inflation fell to its lowest point in nearly 20 years, dropping to 12 per cent in 2001. It was in 2002 that economic trouble began, as oil prices dipped again and capital flight accompanied business-led strikes and the coup attempt against Chávez. The government's economic management has been far from perfect, suffering from the lack of experience of many of its ministers and a certain amount of traditional clientelism. But if it is to be faulted for anything, it is not for excessive radicalism, but—its skilful OPEC diplomacy apart—pragmatic muddle and lack of imagination. If the country is in low water today, the blame attaches not to the government's performance, but overwhelmingly to the destructive venom of the opposition, whose eight-week blockade of the economy and oil industry this winter cost Venezuela \$6 billion, guaranteeing an even more drastic fall in GDP in 2003 than the 8.7 per cent registered in 2002.² Whatever damage has been caused by shortcomings of government policy, it is minor compared with the deliberate sabotage of the 'Democratic Coordination'.

Colouring and suffusing both main accusations levelled at Chávez—that his regime is bent on a totalitarian dictatorship, and is bankrupting a prosperous country—is a vaguer, but no less passionate charge that he is a divisive ruler, whose abrasive and autocratic style has split the nation into warring camps. There is more substance to this notion, but it needs to be translated out of the idiom in which it is expressed. There is no doubt that Chávez is a rhetorically aggressive leader who has little fear of political confrontation. Nor that he has been a better mass orator and military organizer than political manager or corridor diplomat. But the complaints so widely heard in Venezuela about his style as President reflect something much deeper than dislike of his polemical gifts. What they really bespeak is a class fear.

For Chávez communicates with Venezuela's poor in metaphors they can relate to, though they seem to the upper and middle classes improper or undignified expressions for a head of state to use. Although himself well-read, he visibly comes out of the same culture as the disadvantaged majority of the population, rather than the educated elite. In Venezuela the social division between the two overlaps, as so often

² See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Venezuela*, March 2003.

in Latin America, with racial differences. This is a country where 67 per cent of the population are classified as *mestizos* and 10 per cent as black, leaving a minority of 23 per cent whites. Chávez, like most lower-class Venezuelans, is dark-skinned. A cursory look at demonstrations for and against the government is enough for anyone to notice the colour contrast between them. Most Chávez supporters are either *pardos* like himself, or blacks; most opponents are whites. The way the latter refer to *chavistas*, regularly describing them as *lumpen* or *negros*, leaves little room to doubt the feelings of racist hostility that the President and his following inspire in much of the Venezuelan middle class.

The combination of ideological and racial phobias, stirred up by every resource of prejudice, makes a potent brew. The private media—overwhelmingly dominant in Venezuela—have welded all these themes into an obsessive discourse, such that anyone who questions it is automatically declared to be living in a fantasy world. The script is identical in all major television networks and newspapers; these have whipped up a violent hatred of Chávez in large areas of Venezuelan society, increasingly reciprocated by his supporters. In this sense, the country has indeed become more politically polarized than at any time since the height of the guerrilla movement in the early 1960s. But the real reasons for the chasm that has opened up between the government and opposition have little to do with the phantasmagorias of the Democratic Coordination.

Failures of the old regime

For Chávez has been less a catalyst than a product of the ever-deepening class divisions that have marked Venezuela, more than any other country in Latin America, over the past twenty years. If in the seventies, rocketing oil prices had given the country the highest per capita income in the continent, funding a huge apparatus of state patronage and middle-class consumption, little productive domestic industry was created and the fate of the poor was consistently neglected. By the time petroleum revenues started to fall, astronomic levels of waste and corruption had become routine to a political establishment composed of two alternating parties—Acción Democrática, nominally Social-Democratic, and *COPEI*, nominally Christian-Democratic—who shared the spoils of clientelistic power. Between 1978 and 1985, GDP fell continuously while capital fled the country and foreign debt exploded. Two successive attempts to impose neoliberal shock therapies failed—the first in 1989, detonating

nationwide riots and heavy loss of life, the second in 1996, setting the stage for Chávez's rise to power.³ By the mid-nineties, GDP per capita had dropped back to the level of the sixties, and real industrial (and minimum) wages had collapsed to a mere 40 per cent of their value in the eighties.

This implosion of the economy not only brought disaster to the great majority of Venezuelans, it also brutally exacerbated already very high levels of inequality. As wages plummeted and social spending was cut by an increasingly desperate state, the proportion of the population living below the poverty line soared from 36 per cent in 1984 to 66 per cent in 1995, and the number of those living in extreme poverty trebled, rising from 11 to 36 per cent. Over the same period urban unemployment more than doubled, topping the league for the continent. Yet while the share in national income of the poorest two-fifths of the population fell from 19.1 to 14.7 per cent between 1981 and 1997, that of the richest tenth jumped from 21.8 to 32.8 per cent.⁴ Bitter misery for the many and flaunted wealth for the few, with a shrinking but still privileged middle class between the two: such was the reality of social polarization under the Old Regime. In these conditions, what 'unifying' political recipe was possible? Chávez has focused the stark divisions of Venezuelan society, making them more visible and acute, but he has scarcely caused them. In essence, the conflict that has escalated around his Presidency is an all-out class war.

Thus the actual triggers for the assault on Chávez have had little to do with its ideological pretexts. They are to be found in the social programmes of the government. Ironically, Chávez—whose first two years in power were concentrated mainly on reorganizing the political framework of the state, through a new constitution—was slow to move on these. But once he did so, starting in 2001, tension immediately flared up. To begin with, the Venezuelan middle class objected to the way Chávez spent the increased oil income that started to flow in after 1999 (thanks in part to his government's activism in OPEC) on projects that benefit the poor: the state education budget increased from 3.3 to 5.2 per cent of GNP between 1999 and 2001, that of public housing and community services rose

³ For a recent analysis of these two episodes, see Kurt Weyland, *The Politics of Market Reform in Fragile Democracies*, Princeton 2002.

⁴ For these figures, see Kenneth Roberts, 'Social Polarization and Populist Resurgence', in Steve Ellner and Daniel Hellinger, eds, *Venezuelan Politics in the Chávez Era*, Boulder 2003, pp. 59–60: the best recent collection of essays on the country.

from 0.8 to 1.5 per cent and health spending from 1.1 to 1.4 per cent. The middle class has little reason to appreciate these policies, since for the most part it relies on private schools and medical treatment. More recently, the devaluation introduced after the failure of the opposition's oil blockade hit the middle class much harder than the poor, since it consumes many more products and services—such as cars or vacations in Florida—that are imported or denominated in dollars.

Battle over oil

But behind these discontents lie two much weightier issues, which have mobilized the real striking-forces of the Democratic Coordination. Both stem from what in retrospect can be seen as the turning-point in Chávez's administration when, in November 2001, he made use of an Enabling Law that was about to expire to issue forty-nine decrees with legislative force, covering a wide range of socio-economic policy areas. One of these was an oil reform law, scheduled to come into effect on 1 January 2003. The petroleum industry has been formally nationalized in Venezuela since 1976. PDVSA, the holding company that controls it, is in turnover Latin America's largest single corporation, but also one of its least efficient, according to a recent ranking by the magazine *América Economía*. Currently it costs PDVSA about three times as much to extract a barrel of oil as it costs other major oil corporations, such as ExxonMobil, Shell or ChevronTexaco.

The company is run like a private state within a state, by a highly privileged management that has long been hostile not only to OPEC (of which Venezuela remains a founding member), but to any kind of national or social development strategy. Under the control of successive presidents—most recently, Luis Giusti, himself a wealthy private owner of oil tankers and computer services utilized by the company—PDVSA has deliberately maximized overseas investments (it owns refineries in Europe and the US and a large chain of North American gas stations, for example), and used transfer pricing to its affiliates to lower the royalties it pays to the Venezuelan state, which had fallen from 71 cents per dollar of gross earnings in 1981 to a mere 39 cents by 2000.⁵ Not content with this siphoning off of national resources, the bosses of PDVSA have encouraged foreign oil

⁵ For this, and the machinations of PDVSA in general, see the excellent contribution by Bernard Mommer, 'Subversive Oil', in Ellner and Hellinger, *Venezuelan Politics in the Chávez Era*, pp. 131–45.

companies to enter the country again, tried to undercut OPEC quotas, and sought to open the door for future privatizations.

Starting to grapple with this situation, Chávez's new oil law limited foreign companies to 50 per cent joint ventures and doubled the fixed royalties that have to be paid to the state per barrel of extracted oil. It also for the first time imposed some accounting and fiscal transparency on the murky operations of PDVSA, and contained provisions allowing the government to restructure the petroleum industry in due course. When the implications of the new legislation sank in, the PDVSA management went ballistic, and with the lavish resources at its disposal—traditionally used to buy up venal politicians and journalists to get its way, under the old order—orchestrated the first general strike against the government on 10 December 2001, in league with the employers' association FEDECAMARAS and the notoriously corrupt trade-union bureaucracy of the CTV. In response, two months later Chávez dismissed the senior managers of PDVSA—a move made into the *casus belli* for the coup against him in April.

The extent of PDVSA's muscle became evident in the aftermath of the putsch, when Chávez—even restored to power—was forced to reinstate the managers he had fired, who promptly set to work conspiring against him once more. The final showdown came with the mega-assault on Chávez of December 2002, whose nerve-centre was the stoppage in the oil industry, masterminded by one of PDVSA's most aggressive executives, Juan Fernández. In social character, this was closer to a lock-out than a strike, since it was essentially the shut-down of computer-controls by managers and white-collar technicians that cut off oil supplies. The oil workers' union itself, Fedepetrol, refused to join the stoppage, though selected tanker captains and dockers did so. The collapse of the strike in late January has dealt a heavy blow to the PDVSA elite. Its most factional managers have been purged, oil production has been restored with unexpected speed, not least because of the engagement of the workers themselves, and the company is now more securely under the command of former OPEC Secretary-General Ali Rodríguez.

Entitlements to land

The second fundamental issue that has put the opposition onto red alert is land. Prominent in the package of 49 decrees in November 2001 was a

major agrarian reform. In itself, land reform is no novelty in Venezuela, which—like many other Latin American countries in the days of the Alliance for Progress, when Washington was fearful that the example of the Cuban Revolution might spread—passed a modest law in 1960 that eventually benefited up to 150,000 small farmers. This programme, however, quickly fell apart in the 1970s, when the government lost interest in it during the oil bonanza. The original measure had in any case failed to provide adequate credit, technical or marketing assistance to the peasants who received land, and did little or nothing to change the overall picture of Venezuelan agriculture.

In the forty years that have elapsed since this timid experiment, Venezuela has become an overwhelmingly urbanized society, in which 87 per cent of a population of 25 million live in towns.⁶ Over the same period, agriculture's share of GDP declined from 50 per cent in 1960 to a mere 6 per cent in 1999, the lowest figure in Latin America. Venezuela, in fact, is the continent's only net importer of agricultural products. The main reason for this dramatic change has, of course, been the distorting effect of oil rents, which have long been responsible for a wasting 'Dutch disease'—generating a high exchange rate that makes local products, agrarian or industrial, uncompetitive on international and domestic markets, and shifting labour into non-tradeable services.

This does not mean, of course, that land in the countryside therefore loses all value. But it has lowered the pressure for any serious redistribution of a fantastically unequal property structure. No less than 75 per cent of the private agricultural land is owned by 5 per cent of proprietors, while 75 per cent hold only 6 per cent of the land.⁷ Furthermore, it is estimated that 60 per cent of Venezuela's rural producers work the land for themselves—that is, are not day-labourers—yet have no title to the plots they till.

The *Ley de Tierras* passed by Chávez seeks to redress this dismal scene in three ways. Firstly, it sets a maximum legal size of farms, ranging from 100 to 5,000 hectares according to respective productivity. Seeking to put an end to latifundia that are not used for agricultural purposes,

⁶ The overall urbanization of Latin America is now 75 per cent of the total population; the figure worldwide is 46 per cent. See World Bank, *World Development Report 2000/2001*, New York 2001.

⁷ *Censo Agrícola*, 1998.

it levies a special tax on any holding that is left more than 80 per cent idle, and allows for the redistribution of certain lands to landless peasants who commit themselves to their cultivation. Only high-quality idle land of over 100 hectares or lower quality land of over 5,000 hectares, however, can be expropriated—at market value. *Chavistas* maintain that there is abundant government-owned land that can be redistributed before any private property needs to be transferred. Any Venezuelan citizen who is either the head of a family or is between 18 and 25 years old may apply for a parcel of land and, after three years of cultivation, acquire a title to it that can be passed on to descendants, but not sold: a provision that has drawn strong criticism, as discriminating against peasants who, if they need to sell, will be driven to do so at heavily—40 to 60 per cent—discounted prices on a black market for sub-legal transactions.⁸ By redistributing land to smaller family farms, however, the government hopes not only to mitigate the huge social injustices of the present pattern of ownership, but also to increase agricultural output, in the belief that modest-sized units are generally more efficient than vast estates or ranches.⁹ With the long-term objective of making Venezuela self-sufficient in foodstuffs, it aims to double the share of agriculture in GDP to 12 per cent by 2007.

As of April 2003, around 200,000 hectares (some 500,000 acres) have been distributed to 4,500 families. The government plans to accelerate the programme so that by August 2003 over 130,000 families will have received 1.5 million hectares—an average of about 10 hectares, or 25 acres, per family. This pace, if it is kept up, would compare favourably with Venezuela's 1960 reforms. Land reform, however, is a notoriously uncertain affair. The FAO reports that most land reforms carried out since 1945, throughout the world, have failed to assure either equity or efficiency, above all because there is typically a tremendous gap between theory and practice. Laws and intentions are one thing; implementation and results are another. Critics may legitimately ask: what is there to suggest that the Venezuelan programme, in a country which has neglected the countryside for so long, will succeed where others have aborted? The official answer is that the *Ley de Tierras* has created three new institutions to back up redistribution: the National Land Institute, responsible

⁸ For this point, see Olivier Delahaye, 'La discusión sobre la ley de tierras; espejismos y realidades', *Revista SIC*, August 2002, pp. 351–54; www.gumilla.org.ve

⁹ For this widely shared judgement, see James Riddell, 'Contemporary Thinking on Land Reform', FAO Paper, March 2000.

for land tenancy; the National Rural Development Institute, in charge of technical and infrastructural aid to producers; and the Venezuelan Agricultural Corporation, to provide them with marketing assistance. Above all, the Chávez administration insists that it has what was always wanting in the past—the political will to force through real change in agrarian relations.

That this is not an empty threat can be seen from the violence of the reactions to the new law by defenders of the status quo. FEDECAMARAS was so outraged by what it termed this violation of the rights of private property that it highlighted the *Ley de Tierras* as the single most important reason for launching the first employer-led lock-out of 10 December 2001, just a month after the package of 49 decrees was announced by Chávez. The crv joined the action with the somewhat unusual explanation—for a trade-union federation—that the land law and associated measures would impinge on employers' ability to do business. The 'strike' failed, but resistance to agrarian change soon found other and more deadly forms.

In August 2002, in a small town in northern Venezuela, a man wearing a ski mask drove up to Pedro Doria, a respected surgeon and leader of the local land committee, called his name and, as Doria turned, shot him five times. The committee Doria led was in the process of claiming title to idle lands south of Lake Maracaibo which, according to government records, belonged to the state and could thus be legally transferred to the fifty peasant families that had applied for ownership. However, a local *latifundista* also claimed title to the property, and on several occasions had refused to let Doria and government representatives inspect it. It is common knowledge in the region that this landowner is a close friend of former Venezuelan president Carlos Andrés Pérez, driven from office for corruption, who is himself said to own over 60,000 hectares through third parties throughout the country, the vast majority of it idle.

Doria was not the first peasant leader to be targeted by professional killers or paramilitaries. Another who escaped from death earlier this year was José Huerta. Shot in the shoulder, he barely survived. Huerta was working for the National Land Institute at the time and was in charge of processing the claims of Doria's committee. According to Braulio Álvarez, director of a coalition that links about a dozen peasant organizations, over fifty popular leaders have been assassinated in the past

year. None of these cases has been resolved, mostly due to collusion between large landowners and the police. For example, in the cases of Doria and Huerta, the *latifundista* suspected to have hired the gunmen is Omar Contreras Barboza, former Minister of Agriculture in Carlos Andrés Pérez's government and brother of an ex-governor of the state of Zulia, where the disputed lands are located. If the most spectacular episodes of the class war raging in Venezuela have occurred in the towns, its deadliest front so far is in the countryside.

Shanty-town entitlements

Meanwhile, a very different sort of land reform has moved up the agenda, one that may decide the fate of the Chávez government. Nearly nine out of ten Venezuelans live in the towns. Of these, an estimated 60 per cent are camped in slums on land that they occupied by squatting or invasion, on which they have built ramshackle homes, of tin and wood, or rudimentary brick as the case may be. Many of these *barrios* cluster on unsafe terrain, like the hillsides that surround Caracas, at perpetual risk of sliding into the valley below whenever there are strong rains. Earlier governments had always argued that the only solution to the squalor and poverty of these shanty-towns was to tear them down and relocate their inhabitants to public housing elsewhere. Predictably, that was virtually never done, because it was prohibitively expensive. Instead, the real attitude of the old regime to the poor was cruelly displayed when they poured down from the hillsides in the tumultuous riots against the neoliberal package imposed by Carlos Andrés Pérez—the famous *caracazo* set off on 27 February 1989—in which the police and military slaughtered anywhere between 300 and 1,000 people from the *barrios* nation-wide. In the wake of this trauma, a movement known as the *asamblea de barrios* developed in the slums which, for the first time, made the legalization of their homes a central demand of Venezuela's poor. Eventually, this *asamblea* merged into Chávez's 'Bolivarian' movement and helped elect him President in late 1998.

However, once in the Miraflores, Chávez devoted his attention to other questions. So it was that the issue was taken up in the Congress elected in 2000 by one of the opposition forces, Primero Justicia, a recently formed party led by ambitious professionals from the rich suburbs, who hoped to inherit the space left vacant by the disgrace of the traditional dyarchy of AD and COPEI. Nimbly adopting ideas of the Peruvian writer

Hernando de Soto, theorist of a kind of 'neoliberalism from below' in his books *The Other Path* and *The Mystery of Capital*,¹⁰ this grouping submitted a draft law transferring land titles to slum-dwellers either where the state was the landowner, or where they had occupied the land for ten years or more (also known as *usucapión*). The draft emphasized the sanctity of private property, and imposed punishments of up to five years' imprisonment for land invasions.

However, after appearing to have all but forgotten this burning social issue in the first phase of his Presidency, on 4 February 2002—the tenth anniversary of his original attempt to overthrow Carlos Andrés Pérez—Chávez announced a new decree, by which his government would transfer the legal ownership of the *barrios* to their inhabitants. The timing of his speech, coming between the first general strike against him in December 2001 and the attempted coup of April 2002, makes it clear that, under a vitriolic barrage of media and oppositional attack, the government realized it was losing popular ground and had to regain it with a dramatic initiative. Some 7,000 families have benefited from the programme in the past year and, by the end of 2003, about 500,000 plots are due to be transferred.

Barrios in credit

But the decree could transfer only publicly owned land. Iván Martínez, the director of the National Technical Office for the Regularization of Urban Land Tenancy, estimates that approximately one third of the terrain the *barrios* now occupy belongs to the state, one third is privately owned, and one third is indeterminate or contested. To transfer privately owned land to *barrio* inhabitants, a law has to be passed through Congress. Legislation to this end, a 'Special Law to Regularize Land Tenancy in Poor Urban Settlements', has been proposed by Chávez's Fifth Republic Movement (MVR), and is due to be passed after extensive

¹⁰ De Soto's work, which argues that in Third World countries the poor are prevented from entrepreneurial activity and successful capital accumulation by a mass of bureaucratic red tape and lack of property rights to their homes, was hailed by Thatcher, Clinton, Friedman and William Buckley, among others. It ignores, of course, how the poor came to be such in the first place. For critical reviews, see *inter alia* Jeff Madrick, 'The Charms of Property', *New York Review of Books*, 31 May 2001; and Carlos Lozada, 'Poverty Solved. No Fuss, No Muss', *American Prospect*, 26 February 2001.

consultation with the communities that are to benefit from it. For this purpose, 'land committees' have been created in every *barrio*, which send representatives to the National Assembly to discuss the law together with the legislators. According to Martínez, they have proposed numerous changes to the original draft, including provisions for the creation of communal property. This is one of the first laws in Venezuelan history that is being hammered out with those actually affected by it. Once in force, it will have a significant impact on the lives of more Venezuelan citizens than any other governmental programme save public education. As many as ten million Venezuelans, or 40 per cent of the population, could eventually benefit, even if Martínez reckons that the law could take up to ten years to implement in full.

The rationale of the transfer, as Martínez puts it, is first of all 'a recognition of the social debt which the state owes the population'. For in the past half-century, the state constructed one million homes for its citizens; the private sector erected about two million; while the inhabitants of *barrios*, with infinitely fewer resources than either, built over three million. Considering that it costs about ten times as much to tear down a *barrio* home and build a new one somewhere else, it is clear that 'the *barrios* are part of the solution, not the problem', in Martínez's words. Andrés Antillano, an organizer in La Vega, one of Venezuela's largest, oldest and most politicized shanty-towns, who has worked together with Martínez on the draft of the new law, adds that it aims at 'recognizing the *barrio* as a collective subject with legal rights and profound transformative potentials'. In other words, where De Soto and Primero Justicia view urban land reform as essentially a means to encourage the accumulation of capital in the *barrios*, Chávez's supporters see it as a path to participatory democracy and self-help in the communities.

The land committees necessitated by the decree and proposed law are composed of seven to eleven individuals, elected by a gathering of at least half of the families in any given community, up to a maximum of two hundred. The committees are then free to choose the polygonal of land, the territory of the community, they represent. At first sight, their function looks similar to that of the Bolivarian Circles that Chávez had created in 2001. According to their literature, these Circles 'discuss problems of their community and direct them towards the appropriate governing body, to find a rapid solution for them'. While the media and the opposition demonize them as the shock troops of a totalitarian

regime, the truth is that for the most part they do exactly what their pamphlets proclaim—put on cultural events, paint murals of Simón Bolívar, organize workshops to discuss the constitution and build community centres. In this sense they have been a force for *barrio* transformation.

The difference between the Circles and the land committees, however, is that the former are, by and large, partisan groups of up to a dozen self-selected individuals who support the Chávez government and want to regenerate their country. The land committees, on the other hand, are democratically elected to represent a particular community of up to 200 families and do not have any political affiliation. By the summer of 2002 it was estimated that over 300 of them had come into being, representing about 150,000 people. They perform a wide variety of tasks, that fall broadly speaking into three areas: regularization of urban property titles; self-government of the *barrio*; and 'self-transformation' of the neighbourhood. Additionally, but more temporarily, they participate in the formulation of the urban land law.

In the regularization of property titles, the committees take an active part in measuring the plots of land that each family occupies, and adjudicating disputes between them. Since the surveys have to be accurate, government officials work with them, training slum-dwellers how to use the necessary equipment. The process can be tricky because *barrio* homes often have such irregular shapes. The process of registration also involves designating which parts of *barrio* land should be communally owned, to provide recreational space. Once the land is registered, each family can claim their titles by providing proof of ownership, usually in the form of receipts for building materials or utility bills. The National Technical Office then provides a certificate which, once the property is ready to be transferred and if no one else claims title to the land within three months, can be exchanged for the actual property deeds. However, only dwellings built on safe land—that is, sites that do not endanger their inhabitants by too unstable or precarious a location—are eligible for such ownership. Those who live on unsafe terrain have the right to exchange their claim to property for a government-built home in a different location. Likewise, land invasions that have occurred since the decree of February 2002 cannot participate in the entitlement process, but must look to the government's public housing programme instead.

So far as the objective of self-government goes, the land committees embody much more manageable units than current administrative districts, which in Caracas can consist of over half a million citizens apiece. The committees provide partners for municipal agencies and utility companies, for joint improvement of public services—water, electricity, waste disposal or road access. They have even begun to form sub-committees to work on these different tasks, including the organization of cultural activities, enhancement of security, and embellishment of their neighbourhoods.

Finally, what is meant by 'self-transformation' of the community? Under this heading, the land committees are charged with drafting a charter for their *barrio* that tells its history, defines its territory, sets out its ground rules and explains its values. The charter is meant to strengthen the communal identity of the *barrio*. The idea is that only a strong sense of collective identity will lead to a real community, and hence to the possibility of a purposeful change of its conditions of existence. Government officials hope, of course, that some of the benefits that de Soto describes will take effect in the *barrios*, as a real-estate market develops that allows people to use their homes as collateral for small business loans and thriving mini-entrepreneurship. But when asked what they most want from this programme, slum-dwellers regularly mention 'recognition'. Nora, a participant in one land sub-committee said, 'we believe in the government here not because of the titles, but because we can now participate more in decisions that affect the community'. Still, she adds, 'People are asking, why has it taken so many years for a government to meet this demand?'

Bolivarian privatizations?

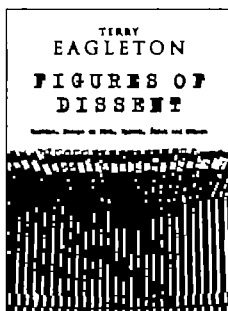
Paradoxically, the rural and urban land reforms of the Chávez government are in effect privatization programmes, since so much of the property to be redistributed by them is publicly owned. But, of course, this is privatization whose social meaning is the very opposite of the neoliberal prescriptions of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which promote or impose the sale of large state-owned resources and utilities—water, telephone, electricity etcetera—to transnational corporations. Here it is the poor who benefit from the dismantling of nominal, unutilized appurtenances of the state—those who actually live or work on the land.

While the government does not appear to have planned its urban and rural land reforms as a package, it is clear that the two should be interconnected. Michael McDermott, an expert in the area, remarks that if 'you carry out urban and not rural land reform, you may find your success stories drowned by too many immigrants. Reform should be comprehensive and integrated'.¹¹ In Venezuela both programmes are of immense scope and complexity, and face formidable difficulties: powerful *latifundistas* with a tenacious grip on huge holdings, paramilitaries assassinating peasant leaders, *narcotraficantes* corrupting government officials, not to speak of impatient popular constituencies themselves. But there is little doubt that successful implementation of these programmes would in the long term be the most important legacy the Chávez government could leave, and the surest way of consolidating support for it in the short term.

The opposition is aware of the danger, and determined to oust Chávez before he can enact any irreversible reforms. After the defeat of its successive lock-outs and coup attempts, it is now banking on a recall referendum that, under the provisions of the new constitution, can be held in August, if a sufficient number of signatures is gathered in favour of it. The Democratic Coordination will have little difficulty assembling this quota. But the bar for removing the President is high. To clear it, the opposition must be able to muster a larger number of voters than those who had elected Chávez in the first place. For the moment, that looks beyond it. Still, the opposition is counting on the deep recession into which it has helped to plunge the country—but which the media are already blaming on Chávez, full-blast—to reverse the tide of opinion within the next three or four months. The endgame in Venezuela has yet to be played. How it turns out will affect the political balance in Latin America for some time to come.

¹¹ Chávez has recently recognized this and has now established a joint urban and rural land transfer commission, primarily designed to encourage slum inhabitants to consider moving to rural settlements.

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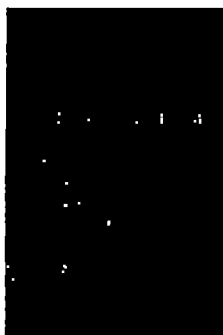
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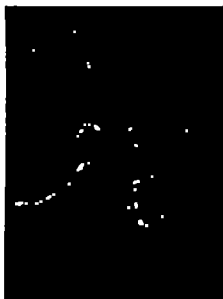
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THE LABYRINTH OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Credo or Common Resource?

FAR FROM BEING a radically new phenomenon, 'globalization' is the latest stage of a process that has unfolded over several centuries, and whose origins can be traced to the Renaissance and the conquest of the New World. Ever since the extermination of America's indigenous population, that process has been at one with the domination of Western countries over all others. This ascendancy has rested not on any physical or moral superiority of the West, but on the material power afforded by its science and technology—which, like the market economy, are products of Western civilization and still closely bound up with it. Western science was founded on the belief that God had bequeathed the earth to man, that he had organized nature according to immutable laws, and that knowledge of these laws would give man mastery over nature. The material strength of the West thus owes much to Christianity, which has cemented its identity.

We are inclined to think that all this belongs to the past, and that Western societies have freed themselves of religion. The 'disenchantment of the world' and 'secularization' have become clichés spread by the social sciences, and many in the West see the attachment of other peoples to the religious foundations of their societies as an anachronism, slated for disappearance. But we should recall that the meaning of the word 'religion' has been reversed in the process of secularization. Formerly the doctrinal basis of society, religion has become a question of individual liberty; a public matter has become a private one, giving

rise to endless confusions about religion. In the Europe of the Middle Ages, religion was not a private affair, and thus in its contemporary sense did not exist.¹ Medieval religion founded the juridical position of both Prince and subjects. The fact that Christianity no longer plays any constitutional role in several Western states does not mean that these states lack all dogmatic foundations.² States, like people, are still moved by undemonstrable certainties—a set of beliefs that is not the expression of a free choice, but is a matter of their very identity. Today, to ask the average Englishman if he believes in the Queen, or a Frenchman in the Republic, would be as pointless as it would have been to ask someone in the Middle Ages the same question of the Pope.

Western man's latest article of faith is that he no longer believes in anything. This notion is especially widespread in traditionally Catholic countries, which are also those where State and Church are most clearly separated. But even the stoutest unbelievers will quickly admit their confidence in the value of the dollars—no more than scraps of paper—in their wallets. The American currency does, it is true, bear the legend 'In God We Trust', and its President, who must swear on the Bible, rarely

¹ Jean-Claude Schmitt, 'La croyance au Moyen-Âge', in *Le corps, les rites, les rêves, le temps: Essais d'anthropologie médiévale*, Paris 2001, pp. 77ff.

² The term 'dogmatic' comes from the Greek *dogma* or 'what appears', and originally designated what seems self-evident and therefore has no need to be demonstrated (axioms, founding principles), as well as what is displayed (honours, decorations). The history of this pivotal notion in the fields of medicine, natural science and law has been reconstructed by M. Herberger: *Dogmatik. Zur Geschichte der Begriff und Methode in Medizin und Jurisprudenz*, Frankfurt 1981. Subsequently associated with religious truths, the term acquired a pejorative connotation in the 17th century, which it has never since lost. We owe its heuristic use in an anthropology of the Western world to Pierre Legendre, who defines dogma as 'a discourse of official truth that is honoured as such, of what is said because it should be said'. See *Sur la question dogmatique en Occident*, Paris 1999, p. 78; and more generally *L'Empire de la Vérité. Introduction aux espaces dogmatiques industriels*, Paris 1983 and *De la Société comme Texte. Linéaments d'une anthropologie dogmatique*, Paris 2001. Western societies, like all others, need the solemn affirmation of 'self-evident truths', that is, dogmatic pronouncements that dispense with argument. Anyone who doubts this need only consult the Declaration of American Independence: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. Such were the truths invoked in a much-publicized declaration by patriotic intellectuals in the United States, hailing the War on Terror in the wake of September 11 2001: 'What We're Fighting For: A Letter from America', Institute for American Values, February 2002.

misses a chance to remind us of the special bond between his country and God.³ But the yen or euro, purged of all religious reference, enjoy the same trust. At the very heart of the instrumental rationality of our time we find dogmatic beliefs, instituted and guaranteed by the Law. The economy, as soon as exchange occurs, becomes a system of credit [from *credere*: to believe]; and the generalization of free trade rests entirely on juridical fictions, such as the legal person, the corporation, or the circulation of financial claims ('derivatives', in their latest version); that is, once again: of beliefs. These dogmatic foundations of the market only become visible when the confidence of economic agents starts to falter.⁴ But no sooner do doubts about the veracity of a company's accounts arise than the traditional mechanisms of the oath and heavy fines for perjury—which US law is in the process of extending across world—are called into play, to restore a faith in figures that has temporarily been shaken.⁵ In the last analysis, no States—not even those which claim to be absolutely secular—can function without the support of a certain number of fundamental beliefs that defy any empirical proof, yet determine their mode of existence and their actions. Just as freedom of speech would not be possible without the invariant rules of grammar, so human beings cannot live freely and in harmony without the dogmatics of the Law.

Unequal beliefs

Certain of these fundamental beliefs have come to form part of the juridical dogmata that sustain the institutional structures of the West. The opening declaration of the Preamble to the French Constitution of 1946, repeated in that of 1958, is a good example: 'the French people once again proclaims that every human being, irrespective of race, religion or creed, possesses inalienable and sacred rights'. The subject of the declaration, 'the French people', plainly overflows the confines of our mortal

³ 'The declaration of God in the Pledge of Allegiance doesn't violate rights. As a matter of fact, it's a confirmation of the fact that we received our rights from God, as proclaimed in our Declaration of Independence', President Bush told reporters at the Group of Eight summit meeting in Canada: 28 June 2002, *United Press International*.

⁴ See my 'Dogmatic Foundations of the Market', *Industrial Law Journal*, December 2000.

⁵ The Sarbanes-Oxley law, adopted in the wake of the Enron and WorldCom scandals, obliges the directors of quoted companies to certify under oath as to the truth of their accounts. Perjury is punishable by 20 years imprisonment, and those convicted will be unable to file for bankruptcy to avoid responsibility.

condition, authorizing it to remind the world of what it already explained in 1789. What it announces is the sacredness of man. The dictum is clearly religious in origin, in the earlier historical sense of the term—an enunciation imposed absolutely on all, rather than subject to the individual judgement of each.

Yet to speak here of beliefs rather than religions has in my view the immense advantage of placing all countries and peoples on an equal footing, since all are motivated by beliefs, even if these are not the same. Of course, to see such a perspective as desirable suggests my own founding beliefs, as a descendant of generations of republican school-teachers, and citizen of a state that has made the principle of equality a keystone of its institutions. But a difficulty immediately arises. How can we even begin to reason in terms of equality when numerous great civilizations have, on the contrary, been based on the idea of a rigorous hierarchy of human beings and societies?⁶ Or when biological inequality between persons or races was long taken for granted in the West itself, as one of the established verities of post-Darwinian science?⁷ Or when, in the aftermath of the incident of 9/11, some of our political leaders did not hesitate to pronounce Western values superior to all others?

The problem here is not, of course, particularly new, but it is posed today with particular urgency. Are there beliefs common to all humanity, values that are universally recognized, if not observed, which could form a global institutional framework? Or, on the contrary, are doctrinal systems mutually impenetrable, condemned either to ignore or do battle with each other? Today, this issue is tabled first and foremost by notions of human rights. Are they of universal validity, or is their current cult merely a mask for the worldwide dominion of the West, much as Marxists once saw in the law simply a reflection of the balance of forces in a given society? My purpose here will not be to take sides in this argument, but to suggest a way in which it might be peaceably resolved.

To that end, the first step is to accept that human rights form a dogma of religious origin, articles of a credo rooted in Western Christianity. That does not disqualify them. For as Auguste Comte noted, 'dogmatism is the normal state of the human mind, towards which it naturally

⁶ For the case of India, see Louis Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus. Le système des castes et ses implications*, Paris 1966; Chicago 1980.

⁷ See André Pichot, *La société pure. De Darwin à Hitler*, Paris 2000.

and continually tends, even when it seems farthest removed from it'.⁸ A dogma is a resource, perhaps more indispensable to human life than any other. For as soon as human beings can speak, their horizons extend beyond the life of the senses—sheer biological existence—to questions of meaning. Where meaning stops, madness lies in wait. Man can act freely only where his actions make sense to his beliefs. As Tocqueville observed, 'It is easy to see that no society can prosper without such beliefs, or rather there is none that could survive this way'.⁹

Human rights form part of the techno-scientific enterprise of the West. They serve both to legitimate it, and to canalize it away from inhuman purposes. The rich catalogue of unprecedented atrocities committed in the twentieth century shows how indispensable such canalization has been. But if human rights are to continue to fulfil this salutary function, they need to be reinterpreted in keeping with the development and diffusion of science and technology. That presupposes the appropriation and enrichment of the idea and scope of human rights by non-Western peoples. Only then will they cease to be a credo imposed on the rest of humanity, and become a common dogmatic resource available to all.

It is difficult to deny the dogmatic character of human rights. Many have, of course, attempted to ground them in 'scientific truths', while others have offered the well-meaning notion that the juridical equality of all human beings is mandated by their biological identity.¹⁰ Though prompted by the best intentions, such arguments are in fact a reversion to the logic of a sociobiology that was the seedbed of Nazism and the

⁸ Auguste Comte, *Considérations sur le pouvoir spirituel* (1826), in *Appendice général du système de politique positive*, Paris 1854, p. 204. Comte continues: 'For scepticism is nothing but a state of crisis, the inevitable result of the intellectual interregnum that necessarily supervenes whenever the human mind is called upon to change doctrines; it is at the same time an indispensable means employed either by the individual or by the species to facilitate the transition from one dogmatism to another, which constitutes the sole fundamental utility of doubt... Modern peoples have obeyed the imperious law of our nature, even in their revolutionary period, since each time there was a real need to act, even if only to destroy, they have inevitably been led to give dogmatic form to ideas that were purely critical in essence.'

⁹ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Chicago 2000, p. 407.

¹⁰ See, for example, the outpourings that accompanied the publication, in *Science and Nature* on 11 February 2001, of the human genome sequence, according to which a reading of 'the Great Book of Life' proves that races do not exist ('Les bouleversantes révélations de l'exploration du génome humain'), *Le Monde*, 13 February 2001.

Shoah. For then biological differences would warrant juridical inequalities, and if science—which in the past asserted their existence—were to discover new ones tomorrow, we would have to relinquish the principle of equality.¹¹

To worship Man

But if we set aside the temptations of scientism, we are forced to admit that human rights are just a set of institutional postulates: undemonstrable assertions propping up our legal structures. The 'religion of humanity' prophesied by Auguste Comte has come about—man has taken the place of God at the apex of our belief system.¹² But this religion is a legitimate child of the Christianity that preceded it. The filiation stares out from the face of the universal and atemporal Man to whom all our declarations of rights refer.¹³ Born free, endowed with reason and conscience, equal in dignity and rights to all other men, this is a figure that preserves all the traits of the *imago Dei*. Made in the image of the Christian God, he is simultaneously an individual (unique and indivisible); a sovereign subject (creator and legislator); and a person (spirit incarnate).

First and foremost, the bearer of human rights is an *individual*—a term that originates in Roman law (*indivis*), denoting at once unity and uniqueness. In this conception, as an indivisible being, the individual is the elementary particle—stable and enumerable, endowed with constant and uniform legal properties—of all human societies. On the other hand, as a unique being, each individual is incomparable to any other,

¹¹ Those who asserted the absence of any significant differences between men and women (so-called gender theories), claiming science was on their side, were thrown into disarray when new 'scientific truths' revealed contrasts between the sexes in the layout of the brain. See Mark Lansky, 'Gender, Women and all the Rest', *International Labour Review*, vol. 139, no. 4 (2000), pp. 481ff.

¹² 'Humanity substitutes itself definitively for God, without forgetting his provisional services', wrote Comte in the conclusion of his *Catéchisme positiviste ou Sommaire Exposition de la Religion Universelle* (1852), Paris 1966, p. 299. Renan echoed him with his parting words to the Creator at the end of *L'avenir de la science* (1890), Paris 1995, p. 491: 'Farewell! Although you have deceived me, I love you still!'

¹³ Hereafter I will refer principally to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948.

and constitutes an end in himself. So conceived, all men are necessarily equal, fashioned in the image of God (even women, slaves and heretics). But from the outset there has been a tension between these two sides of individual identity—we are all both the same and different, identical and unique—that runs through the principle of equality proclaimed in our constitutions and declarations of rights. No such image of ourselves can be found in other civilizations, where men may feel inhabited by several beings, or see themselves as parts of a whole that traverses and exceeds, precedes and outlasts them.¹⁴ Man as the bearer of human rights, however, is a being at once complete and insular, who transcends the various fluctuating social groups to which he belongs.¹⁵ The 'family of man' becomes an immense phratry, a society of equals where the collision between individual rights contends with the 'spirit of brotherhood'. In a society reduced to a collection of formally equal individuals, the key to a just order lies in competition between them.¹⁶

The bearer of human rights is also a sovereign *subject*. Made in the image of his creator, he is called to rule over the universe, and may employ to his own ends the law-making power of the Word. Whilst in the Islamic world God is seen as the sole authentic legislator, and human freedom is to be found only in confession of impotence before Him, in Judeo-Christian culture man is linked to God by a Pact that renders him a subject, either as a person (the Christian version) or as a people (the Jewish version). As such, he is the cause of effects without himself being the effect of a cause. Similarly, the man of human-rights discourse, born free and the bearer of an inherent dignity, is a subject, too—in both senses of the term: a being subordinated to the law and protected by it; and an active self, responsible for its deeds and able to determine its own laws. The mastery of laws by human beings takes two forms: civil legislation, which derives its legitimacy from the people to whom it applies and for whom the vote becomes an individual right rather than a constitutional function; and natural science,

¹⁴ See the contribution of Amadou Hampâté Bâ to *La notion de personne en Afrique noire*, Paris 1973, reprinted 1999, pp. 181ff; Maurice Leenhardt, *Do kamo. La personne et le mythe dans le monde mélanésien*, Paris 1947, republished 1985; and Louis Dumont, 'Absence de l'individu dans les institutions de l'Inde', in Ignace Meyerson, ed., *Problèmes de la personne*, Paris 1973, pp. 99ff.

¹⁵ In Article 16 of the Universal Declaration, the couple and the family are the object of individual rights.

¹⁶ Universal Declaration, Article 1.

whose discoveries replace divine revelation, enabling man to dominate nature.¹⁷ In the course of secularization, individual sovereignty has become the keystone of institutions in which each must behave as a master, on pain of foundering into a kind of sub-humanity.¹⁸ Such visions are entirely alien to great civilizations that have valued, on the contrary, the effacement of individual will.¹⁹

Finally, the bearer of human rights is a *person*. 'Everyone has the right to general recognition as a juridical person', announces Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Where Roman Law knew degrees of legal personality, and accorded full recognition to only a handful of men—the figure of the *paterfamilias*—Christianity endowed every human being with personality.²⁰ Just as God was incarnated in Christ, so each man is both matter and spirit, a mortal body and an immortal soul, whose union defines the person. Tirelessly hammering home the notion of a 'free and full development of the personality', the discourse of human rights is the heir to this concept of the individual as a unique spirit, unfolding through a life and surviving after death by virtue of its works. So conceived, personality is not a mask to be stripped away, as in India, but a being to be discovered: the revelation of the spiritual identity of each individual in its physical incarnation.²¹ Modern science has retained this dualism in its opposition of *psyche* to *soma*, treating man as at once a biological animal—an explicable and programmable object—and a disembodied consciousness in command of all things. At once or, unhappily, as either all-powerful spirit or mere 'human material', with all the risks such schizophrenia entails.²² It was because the horrors of two world wars showed where this might lead that the Universal

¹⁷ See Universal Declaration, Article 21, and Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen: Histoire du suffrage universel en France*, Paris 1972, p. 640; and Articles 17, 23 and 27 enshrining, respectively, the right to property, to work and to 'share in scientific progress and its benefits'.

¹⁸ See Philippe d'Iribarne, *Vous serez tous des maîtres. La grande illusion des temps modernes*, Paris 1996.

¹⁹ Osamu Nishitani, 'La formation du sujet au Japon', *Intersignes*, no. 8/9 (1994), pp. 65–77; Malek Chebel, *Le Sujet en islam*, Paris 2002.

²⁰ Paul Girard, *Manuel élémentaire de droit romain*, Paris 1911, p. 91.

²¹ Heinrich Zimmer, *Les philosophies de l'Inde*, Paris 1997, p. 186.

²² Victor Klemperer, *LTI—Notizbuch eines Philologen*, Leipzig 1975. Compromised by its currency under the Nazis, 'human material' has been replaced in contemporary usage by the notion of 'human capital'—initially employed by Stalin.

Declaration made legal personality into a universal and imprescriptible right. For this is a notion that rejoins the two sides of the Western image of man. It was its destruction, Hannah Arendt rightly pointed out, that was 'the first step on the road to total domination'.²³ Such problems do not arise in the numerous civilizations that decline to view man as the carnal temple of an omnipotent spirit, or which believe that things too may be inhabited by spirits.

A particular genealogy

If the individual subject of human rights is an identikit of a specifically Western image of man, so too the vocabulary of Law and Rights is in no way spontaneously universal. The idea that the world is subject to universal and intangible laws is proper to civilizations of the Book: for Einstein, as for a devout Muslim or an atheistic neurobiologist, man is governed by unchanging laws, and nothing is more important, as Maimonides wrote already in the twelfth century, than the study and knowledge of these. Methods for discovering them have varied: some have looked to divine revelation, others to the great Book of Nature. But all have believed that the world is ordered by laws that can be observed and ascertained. Such a conviction is completely foreign to other great civilizations—in the first place that of China, whose outlook could be summed up by Marcel Granet with the formula, 'Neither God, nor laws'. In Confucian thought, the natural or social order is founded on the internalization by each human being of their place within it, and in no way by the application to them of uniform laws. Even the Legalists of the third century BC, who wanted to substitute 'government by laws' for 'government by men', never conceived of human beings as the bearers of individual rights, since they never saw them as the subject of laws.²⁴

The fact that many non-Western civilizations have had, or still have, to adopt legal doctrines of Western origin creates an illusion that they have been converted to the values of the Law. But this is to misunderstand usages that typically are either products of direct colonial imposition or merely instruments for trade with the West, rather than the expression of any social values. Japan offers a striking case in point, since it imported a juridical culture for external use, while preserving its

²³ *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York 1951.

²⁴ See my 'Ontologies of Law', NLR 13, Jan–Feb 2002.

own vision of human society for internal purposes.³⁵ A Japanese jurist can only smile at the introduction of notions of justice or equity into a legal argument: questions of law and questions of value belong to radically different orders.

Still less can the idea of Right (*Droit*) pretend to any universality.³⁶ With its emergence, Law changes character. Ceasing to be a prescription revealed forever by an immutable Text, it becomes a technical object, whose meaning derives from the minds of men, who can create or reform it. So defined, Western notions of Right are the product of a long history, whose turning-point was the Gregorian Revolution of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when the Papacy recycled Roman law for its own purposes, to make itself the living source of laws applicable to all Christendom, and thereby ultimately to the whole world.³⁷ Our conceptions of Right and the State date from this transformation: of Right as an integrated system of rules whose evolution is autonomous; and of the State as an undying Person, source of laws and guarantor of individual rights.³⁸ These institutional structures took on their modern form with the separation of Church and State. Science replaced religion as the universal measure of truth, becoming—as Saint-Simon had predicted—the only spiritual power with authority in the public sphere. The nation-state, freed from the authority of the Church, became a sovereign subject

³⁵ Notably in the rules pertaining to *girl*: see Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, Boston 1946; Maurice Pinguet, *La mort volontaire au Japon*, Paris 1984. See also I. Kitamura, 'Une esquisse psychanalytique de l'homme juridique au Japon', in Takehisa Awaji et al., *Etudes de droit japonais*, Paris 1989.

³⁶ Anglo-American cultures of common law lack the distinction between *loi* (*legge*, *Gesetz*, *ley*) and *Droit* (*Diritto*, *Recht*, *Derecho*), shared throughout continental Europe, whose origin lies in Roman Law, where *lex* designates the source of legitimacy and *ius* its normative effects—respectively, the foundation of a juridical order, and the rules of that order. The distinction between the two acquired its modern meaning in the tradition of Romano-Canon Law, which conceived the state on the model of the Papacy, as the legislative author of Right (*Droit*: the system of rules) and rights (*droits*: prerogatives enjoyed by individuals or corporate bodies). In cultures of common law, it is judges rather than the State that embody the ultimate source of legitimacy, and hence the totemic figure of the Law.

³⁷ See Harold Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*, Cambridge, MA 1983; Pierre Legendre, *La pénétration du droit romain dans le droit canonique classique*, Paris 1964, and *Les enfants du Texte*, Paris 1992, pp. 237ff. See also my 'Travail, droit et technique', *Droit social*, 2002, 1, pp. 13ff.

³⁸ Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: a Study in Medieval Political Theory*, Princeton 1957.

at home and abroad, in a world now conceived as a society of States. Man became an end to himself, without reference to divine purpose.

This contemporary construction, the outcome of a disintegration of what was once a single religious Reference, has from the beginning been beset by a fundamental contradiction that has now burst into the open with globalization. On the one hand, the State and Right rest on national foundations, and international society is conceived as a society of States. On the other, Romanized canon-law notions of universal sovereignty, and a *ius commune* extending to all humanity, persist.²⁹ In turn, each great Nation-State has sought, by force of arms or propaganda, to impose on the world belief in the universal value of its imperium. So it was yesterday with France's *mission civilisatrice*, the British Empire, the German Reich, the Soviet bloc; and so it is today, as the United States spreads its reign of liberty around the world.

Two fundamentalisms

To see human rights as a corpus of dogma, or Religion of Humanity, allows us to approach the question of 'values' in a 'globalized' world rather differently. All major dogmatic systems, whether or not they are regarded as religions, metabolize impulses to violence and murder, and are thereby forms of human self-knowledge. Each of them represents a particular world-view, differing from the others yet each faithful to reality in its own way—like Hokusai's thirty-six views of Mount Fuji, they present various aspects of the same object; none is more 'truthful' than another, since there is no empirical standard by which they can be gauged. The diversity of natural languages offers another analogy since, like these, dogmatic systems cannot be reduced one to another, yet translation between them is possible. We should bear this in mind in considering the hermeneutics of human rights.

If we are to make any progress here, we need to avoid the twin pitfalls of absolutist and relativist attitudes towards human rights, both of which are forms of fundamentalism. Absolutist standpoints regard human

²⁹ See Alain Whiffels, 'Aux confins de l'histoire et du droit: la finalité dans le débat sur la formation d'un nouveau *ius commune*', *Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale*, Supplement, n. 207, December 1998, pp. 33–66. On its contemporary expression in France, see Mireille Delmas-Marty, *Pour un droit commun*, Paris 1994 and *Trois défis pour un droit mondial*, Paris 1998.

rights as a new Decalogue, a set of sacred commandments revealed to 'developing' societies by the 'developed' world. Those who lag behind will be compelled to convert to the faith of modernity—human rights and the market economy. This approach would insist on a literal rendition of human rights, at the expense of any interpretation of them that might be at work within local legal systems. Carried out to the letter, principles of equality and individual liberty can end up justifying the abolition of all differences and limits.

There are many examples of such delirium today in the West. They include demands for the abolition of differences between the sexes; the 'de-institution' of maternity; the dismantling of the special status of children, who are likened to an oppressed minority; the replacement of descent by contract; even—very logically—the right to insanity.³⁰ This is a *messianic* fundamentalism, propagating Western interpretations of human rights across the developed world, and making use of the full arsenal of the modern missionary, from grants in the social sciences to structural adjustment plans.³¹ Predictably, it flourishes in the jurisprudence of courts specially created to enforce the observation of human rights. In July 2001, for instance, the European Court of Human Rights rejected a complaint lodged by a group of MPs from the Refah party, removed from their seats by the Turkish army, on the grounds that they advocated the introduction of the *shari'a*—whose 'stable and unchangeable religious dogmas and divine rules' it deemed incompatible with 'principles of pluralism in political participation or the unceasing evolution of public liberties'. The decision brushed aside the rich history of Islamic legal thought, barring the way for any accommodation between human rights and the values of Muslim law—so vindicating the interpretation of the former by Islamic fundamentalists. Indeed, human-rights fundamentalism can only encourage the rise of contrary, anti-Western fundamentalisms, making human rights the battleground of a war of religions.

³⁰ The reader interested in some of these extravagances can consult 'Quels parents pour demain?', *Le Monde* 19 June 2001; M. Iacub, 'Filiation: le triomphe des mères' and F. de Singly, 'Le contrat remplace la lignée', *Le Monde des Débats*, March 2000, O. Cayla and Y. Thomas, *Du droit de ne pas naître*, Paris 2000.

³¹ There is a preponderance of grants for gender studies in Western programmes of assistance to African scholars. On the need to rid ourselves of nineteenth-century paradigms in the social sciences, see Immanuel Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Sciences*, Cambridge 1991.

The relativist view, on the other hand, considers that human rights suit only the West—freedom, equality and democracy have no meaning in other civilizations. To assume that there can be no communication between major doctrines of a religious cast is to succumb to an *identitarian* fundamentalism, that treats belief-systems as inflexible structures, incapable of evolution or reinterpretation. Within Western countries, one result has been a rising tide of communitarianism among immigrants driven from their homelands by fifty years of ‘development’ policies, and the spread of ‘multi-cultural’ ideals of a society where these different communities would coexist more than cohabit. Another has been an answering surge of communitarianism among ‘natives’, of a xenophobic and racist stamp. The fundamentalism of identity locks people into an ethnic or religious destiny. Westerners, endowed with democratic freedoms and human rights, are masters of their fate. The rest of the world become objects of anthropological inquiry, marked from birth by membership of a community—Afro-American, Hispanic—that can be escaped only by a denial of origins: that is, by renegacy.³²

In the international arena, relativism of this kind downgrades the nation-state in favour of an imperial system along the lines of the Ottoman *millet*, which left local ethnic and religious customs intact, the better to exploit the empire as a whole.³³ Whether intended for internal or international consumption, human-rights relativism is always swathed in the allure of universal tolerance. But it rests firmly on the belief that, if all cultures are in principle equal, the one that guarantees this equality is necessarily worth more than the others.

Opening doors

Both variants of Western fundamentalism present countries of the South with a simple alternative: either transform yourselves by denying who you are, or remain who you are and give up any idea of transforming yourselves. Little wonder, then, that movements preaching a return to a mythical identitarian purity have met with such success.

³² Osamu Nishitani, ‘Two notions of Man in the West: Anthropos and Humanitas’, in *Defining the Twentieth Century*, vol. 4, Tokyo 2001, pp. 35–48.

³³ This idea was suggested by Altan Gokalp. On the *millet*, see Robert Mantran, ‘L’Empire ottoman’, in Maurice Duverger, ed., *Le concept d’empire*, Paris 1980, p. 231 ff.

The escape from this vicious circle lies in *opening the door of interpretation* of human rights to all civilizations. I use this metaphor by design: it has been employed by generations of Muslim intellectuals, seeking to stem the tide of regression in their countries, by reconnecting with the most brilliant chapters of Islamic civilization.³⁴ The cultures of the West are threatened by a similar regression should they yield in their turn to fundamentalism.

To open the doors of interpretation, human rights should be treated as a resource available to all humanity, capable of appropriation by every civilization. The notion of a 'common resource'—the *res communes omnium* of Roman law—is not an arbitrary construction. Its premise is the objective diffusion of the standard model of the State and of the recognition of human rights in the contemporary world. The organization of international society into a system of States is a fact to be respected, above all as the leading power of the West embarks on a new series of imperial adventures. Though the nature of these States varies greatly, the vast majority are signatories to human-rights treaties. There is therefore no reason for a Western monopoly of their interpretation. Further, to conceive of human rights as a common resource is to break with the current 'ecumenical' facade, in which the West shops around among the goods of others for what suits it and rejects the rest. To be common, a resource must be open to general appropriation. Assisting that process is the only way to respect the genius of each civilization without sentencing it to self-enclosure.³⁵

There are many reasons to think such a development is possible. Modern history is replete with examples of societies that have succeeded in appropriating Western modernity without being destroyed by it. It is true the most notable of these—Japan, India and more recently China—possess a rich dogmatic repository, enshrined in a corpus of writing that is fully the equal of that of the West.³⁶ The identity of someone raised on

³⁴ See Louis Gardet, *La Cité musulmane*, Paris 1954, pp. 121ff; Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, Oxford 1964; Mohamed Charfi, *Islam et liberté*, Paris 1998.

³⁵ On the notion of appropriating modernity, see Jacques Berque, *L'Islam au temps du monde*, Arles 1984, p. 87.

³⁶ A penetrating analysis of the prospects of each of these great civilizations was made in the 1920s by Liang Shuming: *Les cultures d'Orient et d'Occident et leurs philosophies*, Paris 2000.

the Mahabharata is unlikely to dissolve in Disneyland. The situation differs where dogmatic resources are threatened by fundamentalist usage, as in the Islamic world, or lack a written corpus, as in much of sub-Saharan Africa. In Muslim societies the danger is to equate Islam with fundamentalism, and to think modernization requires the eradication of all reference to religion from the public sphere. Atatürk's experiment along these lines—which jettisoned the Arabic script, thereby cutting off modern Turks from their written heritage—has not proved a real success. But the problems of interpretation that arise from attempts to reconcile human rights with Islamic law can become fertile terrain for these societies to find their own paths to modernization—provided they are not declared incompatible in advance, as Islamic fundamentalists and the European Court of Human Rights concur.

Interpreting values

The case of Africa is altogether more troubling, for if the West has appropriated numerous elements of its rich culture—dance, music, sculpture—Africa's lack of a written corpus leaves it with few defences against the opposite process, which threatens its civilization with extinction. Fundamentalist readings of human rights can only hasten the process, tearing asunder the social structures that serve as transmission points for African values. For instance, prohibiting child labour in societies without schools deprives children of any opportunity for apprenticeship in their own culture.⁷⁷ Opening the interpretation of human rights to African contributions, on the other hand, might give the West cause to rethink its own ways of bringing up children, which are not necessarily exemplary—schoolwork is itself a form of work, after all, even if it is ignored by labour legislation. The 'common value' in this case is not hard to define: it is the right of a child to be a child, and to be treated as such, according to its needs and abilities. In such conditions, a standard of 'decent work' is a much more promising notion than fulminating prohibitions, ignorant of the civilizations at which they are aimed. Likewise, equality between the sexes is not a mathematical formula to be applied uniformly and universally, but an equality in difference—a fragile equilibrium that hangs on these very differences. It is easy to

⁷⁷ Aminata Cissé-Niang, 'L'interdiction internationale du travail des enfants vue d'Afrique', *Semaine sociale*, no. 1095 (2002).

understand the mistrust of African women for Westerners who, like missionaries of old, come to tell them how to behave with men.

This is not to imply that Africans are naturally resistant to the values expressed by human rights; simply that they should be allowed to make their own interpretations of them. Indeed, juridically the most remarkable attempt to date at such an appropriation was the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights of 27 June 1981.³⁸ As its name suggests, the Charter incorporates the individual rights that feature in Western declarations, but does so within a framework that conceives human beings not as isolated individual subjects, but as connected entities who find their identity as members of a series of communities. Hence the presence in this Charter of subjects of rights other than the individual and the State, towards which both State and individual have obligations: the family—not the object of an individual right, but a 'natural unit and basis of society', which the State as 'custodian of morals and traditional values recognized by the community' has a duty to assist; and the people, who have the right to 'struggle against foreign domination, be it political, economic or cultural'.³⁹

Opening Western conceptions of human rights to these 'African values' might help to resolve certain 'ethical problems' Western societies face themselves. Treating human beings as inseparable from their relationships with others; establishing principles of solidarity between them; asserting the right of peoples to the protection of their environment; safeguarding the educational role of the family—these values do not figure in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, but are no less universal for that.⁴⁰ The African family is not the same thing as the European family; but to describe the family as the 'natural unit and basis of society' says nothing about what shape it should take. It is merely to affirm that every child should be able to count on a stable material and emotional environment in which to grow up. This is a truly universal value that condemns any fundamentalist reading of individual liberties.

³⁸ In Philippe Ardant, *Les textes sur les droits de l'Homme*, Paris 1993, p. 92; English text available at www.law-enforcement-forum.dk/pdf/African%20Charter.pdf. The following discussion owes a great deal to the paper delivered by Josette Nguebou-Toukam at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Ange Guépin at Nantes in November 2001.

³⁹ African Charter, Articles 27, 29, 18 and 20.

⁴⁰ African Charter, Articles 28, 29, 24 and 18.

It is one that calls for an interpretive mediation between individual and collective rights, capable of enriching the meaning of each.

In the West, one of the crucial functions of law has been to control the potentially deadly effects of the sensation of omnipotence that has developed with advances in science and technology, and which threaten the survival of humanity itself. For law to play this role, it must remain open to interpretation, rather than petrify into a fundamentalist conception of individual liberty and equality. The day is not far off when the principle of equality could be used to claim for single people the right to clone themselves—since they currently enjoy none of the rights to procreation possessed by couples. But could a child thus born be declared exclusively the son or daughter of one parent? Certainly not under the African Charter, which demands the protection of the family; nor under the Universal Declaration, if we interpret the right to legal personality in the light of the African Charter. For does not the denial to the child of filiation from one of the sexes constitute a clear violation of the universally recognized right 'to be regarded as a person before the law'? The example demonstrates, at any rate, the potential impact of opening our interpretation of human rights to contributions from other civilizations. The debates that would necessarily follow, drawing on the traditions of every culture, would serve as an antidote to all fundamentalisms.

Global social rights

What are the institutional paths through which such an opening up of interpretations of human rights could be realized? Before suggesting an answer we should first consider the phenomenon that poses the question—globalization. Borders have been flung open to the circulation of goods and capital, but remain largely closed to the movement of people. The WTO has long made it perfectly clear that outside the narrow set of issues covered by its statutes, the fate of human beings is not its concern. Indeed, there has been a global division of labour between international organizations responsible for things and those whose remit covers people—the ILO, WHO, UNESCO. There is, however, a growing recognition today that ignoring the human consequences of free trade endangers the flow of commerce itself. With this realization come questions of how the principles of the market economy are to be articulated with the values of different civilizations around the world. Human rights are integral to the problems raised by economic liberalization. Cases brought because

of the latter can and should act as a spur to the process of reinterpreting these rights, and help to put an end to Northern unilateralism, which brought about the demise—however deserved—of the so-called social clause in international trade agreements.

The 'social dimension of globalization' is destined to remain an empty slogan as long as there are no institutional means for the peoples of the South to propose to the North their own interpretation of basic rights. Countries in the South, for instance, must have some form of defence against the dumping practices of the European Union, which often threaten the very existence of their agriculture; and be able to press claims for appropriate reparations before an international body. We need to transfer the labour rights won at national level over the last two centuries to the international level, so that here too the weak can turn the weapons of the law against those who use the law to exploit them, and so contribute to its progress as a whole. There was from the outset, we should recall, a division within the labour movement between revolutionaries who saw the law as a mere mask for bourgeois exploitation, and aimed at the ultimate withering away of both the State and law, and reformists who sought to make use of the State to transform the law. The first choice led to the communist experiment, which pursued the utopia of a world free of class conflicts; the second to the creation of the welfare state, founded on a social hermeneutics of civil law, which included a right to contest the law. Indeed, the most innovative aspect of the welfare state was not its social provisions—typically less generous and more precarious than those of fascist or communist states—but its guarantee of rights to collective action, which allowed the dominated to fight the dominant classes with their own vision of a just society.

Amid the globalization of the market economy, we likewise need mechanisms to assist the emergence of a human and social hermeneutics of economic law. But unlike the experience of the labour movement, this can no longer be achieved under the aegis of the nation-state. A space must be found for it within the procedures regulating international trade. The simplest solution would be to permit parties in a case taken before the WTO to submit a 'social incidental plea'; since this would not be justiciable by the WTO, the plea could then be referred to an *ad hoc* body under the auspices of the relevant international organization—the ILO, UNESCO and so on. This body could replicate the panel system of the WTO, to ensure a balanced representation of the cultures concerned. The

search for such a balance—or rather, for less imbalance—would also require recognition of rights of action specific to poor countries in their economic relations with rich societies.

History has taught us that proclaiming the principle of equality does not suffice to make a reality of it. Mere declarations of formal equality, indeed, have frequently served to strip the weak of traditional protections. It took over a century for social and economic rights to crystallize, and legal equality between employers and workers to become anything more than a mystification of the exploitation of the latter by the former. Equality of the sexes remains more formal than real, and its enshrinement in EU law has thus far principally led to the suppression of rules protecting family life from the encroachments of the workplace, rather than extended its benefits to working males. The juridical equality between rich and poor still serves to justify the exploitation by one of the other. Only when we cease to view individuals and peoples in the abstract can equality take on substance. To treat rich and poor equally is to forget this, and risk forcing the weak to join the ranks of those who are enemies of equality.

As could be seen in Durban in 2001, the South is engaged in a debate over human rights of the kind the labour movement once knew over industrialization. While some do not hesitate to brush human rights aside, and profess a racist vision of the world, others seek to force the countries of the North to respect them, and admit their historic violations of the principles they profess—the slave trades of Europe and the United States incontrovertibly constituting a crime against humanity.⁴² It is this approach alone that might enable humanity to arrive at an understanding of the values that unite it. Its condition is that the countries of the North cease to impose their own ideas on the rest of the world, and start to learn from other cultures, in a common enterprise of self-examination.

⁴² Defined as the deliberate extermination of civilian populations for political ends, terrorism has also been widely practised by the West—from revolutionary terror to Guernica, from Dresden to Hiroshima. Recognition of this might facilitate discussion of a universally recognized definition of terrorism, which would protect us from the effects of an endless ‘war on terrorism’ without clearly identifiable opponents.

REVIEWS

Idith Zertal, *Ha-Ummah ve ha-Mavet: Historia, Zikkaron, Politika* [Death and the Nation: History, Memory, Politics]
 Or Yehuda: Dvir 2002, NIS 81, paperback
 315 pp, [no ISBN]

GABRIEL PITERBERG

HANNAH ARENDT IN TEL AVIV

Shaar Aliyah (literally: the Gate of Ascent) is both a physical place and a site of memory. In the 1950s it was a transition camp for immigrants to Israel whose ships had disembarked in Haifa. One of them was a little girl, Chava Alberstein, who had arrived with her family from Poland and would become a famous singer. Four decades later she recounted her experience there in a song whose opening line encapsulates the politics of modern memory and history: 'This story begins from the end' (*Et ha-sippur ha-zeh mathilim me-ha-sof*). In the revised edition of his masterpiece, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson proposes a strikingly similar formula. There he argues that the crucial difference between the biography of modern persons and of modern nations is that whereas the former is written 'down time', the latter must of necessity be fashioned 'up time'—that is, must 'start from an originary present'. The result is that 'World War II begets World War I; out of Sedan comes Austerlitz; the ancestor of the Warsaw Uprising is the state of Israel'.

Idith Zertal's book is a powerful demonstration of the force of this claim. *Death and the Nation* covers the history of Zionism in Palestine from 1920 to 1995. Essentially a collection of essays, it continues on a wider canvas the themes of her monographic work, *From Catastrophe to Power: Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel*, of which an English translation was published in 1998; it is to be hoped her new book will also soon be available to non-Hebrew speakers. In *Death and the Nation*, Zertal analyses the

ways in which the events of what she calls 'the short Zionist century' were experienced, narrated and mobilized in the building of the Israeli nation-state. Her focus is on the political, military and cultural elites of the Labour movement that ran the country until 1977, and those of the Right that joined them in power thereafter. Zertal ranges across an impressive variety of materials in documenting the creation of a hegemonic national memory and historical consciousness: from official archives to poetry, from memoirs to court proceedings and laws, and from sites of memory like Yad Vashem to placards showing Rabin dressed as an SS officer. She brings to bear on these a theoretically informed literature on such issues as modern collective memory and comparative nationalism (Pierre Nora and Benedict Anderson are reference points).

Zertal herself is one of a small group of radically critical Israeli scholars who were born close to the establishment of the state or in the first decade of its existence and, generally—though not invariably—grew up in the most privileged environments of the labour movement, either collective agricultural settlements or relatively affluent neighbourhoods of Haifa, Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. Zertal's own background lies in Ein Shemmer, one of the best-known kibbutzim of *Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsair* (Young Guardsman), a movement of originally Marxist outlook. But her work has emerged out of the intellectual milieu of the Israeli journal *Theory and Criticism*, which began to appear in the early 1990s under the auspices of the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, and soon became the chief scholarly forum for radical critiques of Zionism, whether 'anti-' or 'post-' in character. The horizons of this journal have been at once quite universal (informed by such thinkers as Marx, Gramsci, Foucault, Said, and the Subaltern Studies tradition) and very local (operating as a dissenting voice in Israel). Zertal has been an integral part of this project. *Death and the Nation* draws on and contributes to it.

The regularity with which the process of constructing nation-states has tapped into the infinite reservoir of past wars, triumphs or catastrophes to build collective identities is a familiar theme in the scholarly literature on nationalism. Selective uses of the past have time and again been mustered to sustain an 'originary present', as Ernest Renan noted already in his famous essay 'What Is A Nation?' of 1882, which stressed the simultaneous acts of remembering and forgetting necessary to forge one. Zertal's study, however, shows something more than this—a syndrome that seems to be specific to Israel. For here an ideological appropriation of the past by the present was not so much a retrospective operation, as a chronologically intertwined process. For within the 'short Zionist century' that *Death and the Nation* covers dwell both the acts of remembering/forgetting and the actual occurrence of what was remembered/forgotten. It is one thing to instruct Frenchmen and women at the end of the nineteenth century that they 'ought

to have already forgotten' the massacres of the Cathars, or Israeli youth that they ought to identify with the collective suicide of the Massada zealots. It was quite another to mobilize, for analogous purposes, the Judeocide of the 1940s in the 1950s and 1960s. The difference extends from the architects and objects of 'collective memories or state narratives, to those who can now study them.

Zertal opens her account with a reflection on three events whose occurrence, recounting and appropriation predated the founding of the Israeli state: the fall of Tel Hai in 1920, the Warsaw Uprising of 1943 and the Exodus affair of 1947. The latter two, of course, are famous enough in the West. It is the first, however, which is of founding symbolic significance for the construction of the Zionist state in Palestine. One of four early Jewish settlements in northeastern Galilee, Tel Hai was overrun by Arab fighters amid local resistance to the French drive to oust Faysal from Damascus (the British relocated him to Baghdad) during the inter-imperialist carve-up of the Middle East after the First World War. A well-known veteran of the Tsarist Army, Yosef Trumpeldor, was mortally wounded in its defence, expiring during evacuation to an adjacent kibbutz. Zionism's most gifted pen, Vladimir Jabotinsky, ancestor of today's Likud, instantly converted Tel Hai and Trumpeldor—whose last words in Hebrew were allegedly: 'Never mind, it's good to die for our country!'—into embodiments of the Zionist enterprise: redemption of the land and its defence to the death.

Zertal's interpretation of these episodes offers intriguing insights into the way in which successive defeats and losses were registered as mythical triggers for national mobilization, and the tensions between what actually happened and what was remembered of them. Here she makes creative use of the work of Ernst Cassirer (on what sort of events lend themselves to being rendered symbolically), Carlo Ginzburg (on Croce's approach to history, which was crucial to Jabotinsky's world-view) and George Mosse (on the cult of the fallen in battle as a modern civic religion). Throughout, she highlights the dramatic impact of the temporal proximity of the actual events to their political appropriation.

Next Zertal turns to the work of memory as it was officially expressed and embedded in the formative legislation of the 1950s, the first decade of Israeli statehood. Here her contribution is of particular significance. That the Judeocide played a major role in the fight to establish a Jewish state in Palestine in the years 1945–48 is well known. Less so are the ways in which the newly founded state appropriated the authority to remember the Shoah, to speak on behalf of its victims (those who had perished and those who survived), and to teach the nation and the world its lessons. The status of Israel as the sole proprietor of the Shoah is now taken for granted by most of the world as a natural and normal state of affairs. Zertal's meticulous

exploration of the processes that have made this annexation seem obvious undermine them even before her explicit criticism enters the fray.

A case in point is 'The Law to bring the Nazis and Those who Helped them to Justice' passed by the Knesset in 1950, of which Ben-Zion Dinur, a Labour member and one of the most important Zionist historians, said during the parliamentary debate: 'We, Israel, are the inheritors [of those who perished and those who survived]'. It is commonly thought that the aim of this piece of legislation was to facilitate the prosecution of Nazis like Eichmann—who was, indeed, convicted under it a decade later. In fact, while it of course allowed for this, at the time its principal stated targets were Jews who had survived the War, but were thought either to have collaborated with the Nazis or to have behaved in ways that fell short of the expectations of Israeli lawmakers and courts.

There were then roughly 250,000 survivors of the Judeocide who had emigrated and become citizens of Israel. A few of these had filed complaints to the Israeli police against others, alleging criminal behaviour in the camps and ghettos; the Israeli Secret Service (Shabak) gathered other materials, which were also passed to the police. Pinhas Rosen, Minister of Justice, explained that the law was necessary because the survivors had to undergo a purgatory. In an atmosphere of suspicion and rumours, it was essential to establish legally whether allegations were founded and to make it possible for the accused to prove their innocence. We could not be sure, he observed sadly, that some guilty persons might not be found within our camp. 'But even if their number does not exceed the righteous in Sodom, this law should exist'. The state that had become home to a quarter of a million survivors was determined to purify the community of 'new Jews', first by Zionizing the anti-Nazi uprisings of the Second World War, and now by cauterizing itself of those Jews whose behaviour could be deemed compromisingly 'old'. Zertal entitles this powerful section of her book 'Between Disgrace and Purification'.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, about forty cases were brought to the courts under the law. With one exception, all those prosecuted were Jews. Most were not community leaders or prominent *Judenrat* officials, but individuals caught in the hellish circumstances of the concentration camps. The trial of Elsa Ternek is an example. She was 26 years old at the time of her trial and, Zertal surmises, probably 18 when she committed the 'crimes against humanity' of which she was charged: beating up women inmates at Auschwitz-Birkenau with her fists to assemble them for German inspection and orderly distribution of food, and forcing some who were obstinate to kneel for long periods. The testimonies heard in cases like this detailed the horror of the concentration camps and the utter collapse of humanity that could occur there, and in that sense yielded an important

archive. Most of the judges who presided over them were far more sensible and merciful than the legislators and prosecutors: they often criticized the law, both in relation to the conventions of criminal law and in absolute terms, and tended to deliver acquittals or as light punishments as they could. In Elsa Ternek's case, the judge found her guilty of assault and grievous bodily harm, and—dismissing the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity—sentenced her to two years in prison, retroactive from the day of her arrest, so that she was freed on the day of the verdict itself.

The law had intended to make a distinction between the small-time bullies in the inferno of the concentration camps, whose sins were often little more than a push here and a slap there, and the *Judenrat* leaders of towns and ghettos, who were forced to collaborate with the extermination machine in a far more consequential way, by supplying the Nazis with orderly information on their communities, by striking deals with them and by hoodwinking those who were being sent to their death about the nature of their final destination. For reasons that Zertal explores, however, they at first remained immune from the law under which some of those they had helped send, in extreme duress, to the camps were prosecuted. The distinction between the two, however, broke down in the contingency and miscalculation of the Kastner trial of 1955, which severely shook the Labour establishment.

Malkiel Grunwald was a Hungarian Jew who had emigrated to Palestine before the rise of the Nazis. He had lost much of his family in the Judeocide, and his son died fighting with the Irgun in the war of 1948. Owner of a small hotel in Jerusalem, and identified with the Revisionist Right, he detested the Labour Party and the dignitaries affiliated with it from his native country. In the early 50s he developed a special hatred for Dr Israel-Rudolph Kastner, a leader of Hungarian Jewry who had survived the Shoah and begun a promising career in Israel as a spokesman of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and Labour candidate for the Knesset. In a relentless one-man campaign, sticking flyers in mailboxes throughout Jerusalem in the summer of 1952, Grunwald accused Kastner of collaborating with the Nazis in the annihilation of Hungarian Jewry. His language was not restrained. Many of his pamphlets exclaimed: 'The stench of a corpse is itching in my nostrils! Dr. Rudolph Kastner must be eliminated!'

At this point one of the most powerful individuals in the new state, Attorney-General Chaim Cohen—right-hand man of Ben Gurion and a brilliant legal mind—miscalculated. Although the impact of Grunwald's campaign had been quite limited, and politically speaking the wise course for Labour would have been to let it pass, Cohen was disturbed by it. Believing—without investigating Grunwald's charges, which were wildly phrased but contained more than a kernel of truth—Kastner innocent, he decided to reverse the roles of accused and accuser, and brought a libel case

against Grunwald. Kastner himself appears to have been reluctant to open what he knew was a Pandora's box, but had to comply with the Attorney-General's wishes. In the courtroom Grunwald's lawyer Shmuel Tamir, a vehement right-wing critic of Labour, transformed the trial—by his demolition of Kastner—into a political indictment of the Zionist leadership during and since the Shoah. The judge, Benjamin HaLevi, found Grunwald not guilty and won eternal fame by asserting that Kastner 'had sold his soul to the devil'. The verdict was issued in June 1955, just before the elections to the third Knesset. When the votes came in, Herut—ancestor of Likud—had doubled in strength, while Labour's support fell by a tenth. In March 1957, while Kastner's case was being heard in the Supreme Court, he was assassinated in Tel Aviv. Zertal comments that, in retrospect, the Kastner case can be said to have given birth to its corrective, the Eichmann trial, 'Ben Gurion's last national project'.

From the same period dates 'The Law of the Commemoration of the Shoah and Heroism—*Yad Vashem*', introduced by Ben-Zion Dinur, by now a powerful Labour Minister of Education and Culture. Dinur was the very type of a nineteenth-century nationalist historian, who saw it as his mission to trace the unfolding of his nation's *Geist* and inculcate it in each and every compatriot as a living force. For three decades he had actively implemented this vision at the Hebrew University; now came the opportunity to project it onto a wider arena as a major politician. In his address to the Knesset, Dinur explained that the underlying purpose of the law was 'to gather the memory to the homeland'—that is, not only Diaspora Jews but Remembrance itself ought to make the *Aliyah* [ascent to the land of Israel]. The function of the law was to consecrate the sovereign state and its capital as the site endowed with exclusive authority to carry collective memory. The title of the project *Yad Vashem* [Monument and Name] signifies not merely a place, but designates it as Jerusalem—the heart of the nation, the heart of Israel, where all must be concentrated'.

If anything, Zertal somewhat underplays the significance of Dinur's speech, since besides articulating the official memory of the state, it constituted one of the most powerful formalizations (this was after all a law) of the foundational myth of the Negation of Exile. Pivotal to this conception, developed by what is known—not incontrovertibly—as the Jerusalem School of Jewish history, is the idea that presence in the land of Israel, and particularly in Jerusalem, endowed the historian with the objectivity and authority to unfold the history of the nation. That was why Fritz Baer, Gershom Scholem and Dinur himself thought that their scholarship was authentic whereas the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* of their predecessors was not. The scope of Dinur's project, in fact, went beyond constructing the memory of the Shoah. As Minister of Education and Culture, he also played a key role in shaping

the 1953 'Law of National [*Mamlakhti*] Education', which determined the nature of the state-school system (excluding the Orthodox religious network) for decades to come. Here Zertal does not fully develop the logic of the process at work, although she is clearly aware of it. She remarks that the survivors were like unseen but present shadows in the Israeli public space of the 1950s, as Palestinians became 'present absentees'. But she stops short of any consideration of the overall—legal, political and cultural—context of the time, which embraced a host of laws dealing with citizenship, property and land that can also serve to situate the issue of memory, which she analyses so masterfully, within a climactic formalization and realization of the foundational myths of Zionism. One side of this process was negation of the historical experiences of Exile, with the intention of eventually *including* its subjects, the Diaspora Jews, in the newly formed collectivity of Israel. The other side was negation of non-Jewish Palestine, past and present, with the intention of forever *excluding* its subjects, the native Palestinians. If we are looking for a critically formative moment in Israeli history, it is to be found in this complex of legislation and re-memorization of the 50s—rather than in the Six Day War of 1967 and its aftermath, which represented much less of a rupture with the previous history of Zionism than the Israeli peace camp and many others wished to believe.

This phase is the focus of Zertal's next discussion, which shifts to the ways that the Shoah was mobilized—and misused and belittled—in Israel's conflict with the Palestinians and neighbouring states, to 'Nazify' the Arabs. The gist of her argument here is that it was the June 1967 war, and especially 'the period of waiting' which preceded it, that formed the field in which a newly minted memory-discourse of the Judeocide was tested and implemented in rallying the nation to battle. The Hebrew term *tekufat ha-hamtanah*—'the period of waiting'—is an Israeli trope designating the month between the alleged threat of war posed by Nasser and mobilization of the IDF in May, and the Israeli preemptive strike at dawn on 5 June 1967. The construction of this interval as a timespan endowed with special meaning—both while it was unfolding and retrospectively—was marked by a paradoxical mixture of confident, even arrogant power (in rhyming lyrics of a hugely popular song: 'Nasser says he is waiting for Rabin/let him wait and not move/for we are coming all-out after him') with hysteria about another impending Shoah.

This also laid the foundation for defining anything and everything—the al-Aqsa Intifada is the latest example—as, on the one hand, endangering the very existence of the state of Israel, the Jewish people, or both, and on the other hand, as a victory of redemptive proportions. What we have seen since 'the period of waiting' is an exponential growth in the discrepancy of power between Israel and its neighbours, along with a corresponding expansion in

the hysterical and shameless use of the Shoah. Yet another instance simply defies belief: the portrayal of the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, as a prominent Nazi figure. The political contacts between the Mufti and the Third Reich are well known, and have few defenders. It is less well known that in *The Encyclopaedia of the Holocaust* (in both English and Hebrew editions) the length of the entry on the Mufti exceeds that of every prominent Nazi with the exception of Hitler himself.

Logically enough, Zertal then moves to the controversy around Hannah Arendt's book on the Eichmann trial. The centrality of Arendt for Zertal's project, which draws on Arendt's rich writings on totalitarianism, modernity, Judaism, Zionism and Israel, cannot be overstated. She emotionally identifies with Arendt and regards her as a role model: 'In large measure, this book as a whole is a gesture to Hannah Arendt, whose voice has been silenced for years in Israel, and whose writings are essential both for deciphering the twentieth century and understanding Israel'. The fourth chapter of this book seeks to settle her debt to the great German-Jewish thinker most directly. It documents the furore that *Eichmann in Jerusalem* occasioned, and Arendt's ostracism by sectors of American Jewry, as she showed an independence in stark contrast to Hugh Trevor-Roper's docile acceptance of Ben-Gurion's stage-management of the event.

When Arendt's reflections on the trial appeared, they provoked a vehement reproach from Gershom Scholem. The two had known each other as young intellectuals in Berlin, mainly through their mutual friend Walter Benjamin, and re-established contact after the War, exchanging letters and following each other's work. By the late 1940s Scholem had become uneasy at her increasingly critical (and prophetic) view of the course that Zionism was taking. On 23 June 1963, six weeks after receiving a copy of *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Scholem wrote her a letter that he seems to have intended from the outset to become public. Arendt—who typically gave as good as she got—wrote a powerful reply. In asking her permission to print his own letter, Scholem promised that its publication, in any language, would be accompanied by Arendt's reply. She consented. Scholem kept his promise—with one decisive exception: Hebrew, in which his castigation of Arendt was repeatedly published without her rejoinder. Indeed, for nearly forty years, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* itself never appeared in Israel: it was translated into Hebrew only in 2000. Zertal supplies the first Hebrew translation of Arendt's answer to Scholem, in her account of this affair.

What angered Arendt and elicited her devastating response was the tribal line of accusation Scholem adopted, explaining that his disapproval of her views was underwritten by the fact that he could not find in her a shred of 'love of the Jewish people' (*ahavat Israel*)—something, he added, very typical of intellectuals who came from the German Left. In a supposedly conciliatory,

but in reality patronising, register, Scholem concluded by saying that at the end of the day he saw in Arendt none other than 'a daughter of the Jewish people'. In her reply, Arendt recounted a conversation she had once had with Golda Meir—although, as she had promised Scholem, the then foreign minister's identity was concealed behind a masculine pronoun in the published version—in which Meir tried to explain why there was no separation of church and state in Israel.

What he said ran something like this: 'You understand that, as a Socialist, I, of course, do not believe in God; I believe in the Jewish people.' I found this a shocking statement, and, being too shocked I did not reply at the time. But I could have answered: the greatness of this people was once that it believed in God, and believed in Him in such a way that its trust and love towards Him was greater than its fear. And now this people believes only in itself? What good can come of that?—Well, in this sense I do not 'love' the Jews nor do I 'believe' in them; I merely belong to them as a matter of course, beyond dispute and argument.

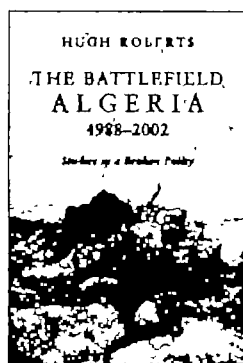
Zertal concludes her study with a chapter, 'The Yellow Border', on the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in November 1995, which she takes to have been the culmination of the ever more irresponsible, frivolous and shameless use of the Shoah, now deployed by the Israeli Right against Rabin and the Oslo Accords, in a violent and relentless agitation that created the background atmosphere for the actual murder. Once the jinn of such manipulation is out of the bottle, she argues, everyone is liable to be paraded as a Nazi. One of my last images of Israel is of a march of terror—one of many—in Jerusalem, leading to Zion Square. On the balcony stood those who comprise the present Israeli government, whipping up the already demented crowd below them, which carried a coffin for Rabin and waved posters and placards of him in SS uniform. Zertal writes a wonderfully eloquent Hebrew prose: it is at its most powerful in this chilling finale.

Still, there is something questionable in the way *Death and the Nation* cuts 'the short Zionist century' off at this point. The cult of Rabin as a far-sighted man of peace, generous but firm in his final office, has created a myth of its own in the treasure house of national memories. Not just because it easily passes over Rabin's brutal and cynical record as a military strongman—it can even put this into service, to enhance the sentimental glow of his final redemption—but more importantly because it obscures the contempt of the arrangements he forced on the Palestinians at Oslo. One can understand Zertal's rage at the stupidity and impotence of Rabin's own camp in countering the Right, and her frustration that his murder should now be represented essentially as an illegitimate obstacle to the nauseating unity of the nation. But his death should be remembered,

not out of any particular admiration for the politician, but because—as Jamal Zahalka, now a member of the Knesset representing the National Democratic Alliance, once said—in a democratic state Prime Ministers are voted in and out of office, not murdered. In any event, the century of Zionism is still with us, as supporters and opponents of Rabin alike convulsively clutch the same banner in colonial warfare today. Zertal's book shows us how the justifications of this grim present have been constructed out of the sufferings of the past. Reading *Death and the Nation* is a compelling and disturbing experience.

Gabriel Piterberg teaches history at UCLA; *An Ottoman Tragedy* will be published later this year.

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Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of US Diplomacy*

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320 pp, 0 674 00940 1

PETER GOWAN

INSTRUMENTS OF EMPIRE

With the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, conventional accounts of the worldwide expansion of American power since the outbreak of the Pacific War have been in some disarray. The standard version of US power-projection abroad has held that it was called forth by the overriding need, first to liberate Europe and Japan from Fascism, and then to protect democracies everywhere from the USSR and Communism. Logically, then, once the Free World was no longer threatened either by Fascism or Communism, the global operations of the American state ought to have been scaled back. But in fact they have extended yet further, into regions of the earth of which few in Washington had ever dreamed. As the ideological fog of the Cold War cleared, what was revealed was a special kind of imperial state with huge military and civil bureaucracies, flanked by massive business organizations, jutting out into large zones of Eurasia, South America and other parts of the world. How was this to be explained?

Through much of the 90s, the new landscape was still in part obscured by the vapours of 'globalization', propagated by sociologists and speechwriters of the Western establishment. Since the turn of the century, however, it has become more difficult to ignore, and there is now a growing volume of literature seeking to address it. In this field, *American Empire* strikes a singularly refreshing note. The historian who has written it, Andrew Bacevich, is a former military officer, whose voice retains something of his army background: his picture on the dust-jacket suggests a more amiable and good-looking version of Oliver North. But there is nothing barracks-like about his prose. *American Empire* is a tonic to read: crisp, vivid, pungent, with a dry sense of humour and sharp sense of hypocrisies. Bacevich is

a conservative, who explains that he believed in the justice of America's war against Communism, and continues to do so, but once it was over came to the conclusion that us expansionism both preceded and exceeded the logic of the Cold War, and needed to be understood in a longer, more continuous historical *durée*.

The search for an intellectual perspective that could grasp the dynamics of imperial power led this Army colonel to cross political tracks and find answers in two bodies of work associated, in different contexts, with the American Left—the writings of Charles Beard, in the inter-war years, and William Appleman Williams, from the 1950s to the 1970s. Both these historians had insisted that the United States, contrary to official liberal mythology, was an expansionist power—not drawn to generous actions abroad by lofty internationalist ideals, but driven towards ceaseless diplomatic and military interventions across the world by forces deeply rooted within American society at home. In the 1920s Beard, already famous for his economic interpretations of the Constitution and the Civil War, turned his attention to us foreign policy, and concluded—consistently with the general focus of his work—that 'as the domestic market was saturated and capital heaped up for investment, the pressure for the expansion of the American commercial empire rose with corresponding speed'. Fearing the consequences of this dynamic, Beard advocated an alternative route of development, much in the spirit of Hobson in England: the better way forward was to deepen the domestic market by raising the living standards of American workers and investing in social programmes at home.

The great obstacle to such a path lay in the fear of the American business class that such deepening might unleash political forces that would undermine the entrenched privileges of the propertied classes within the United States itself. For this bloc, if domestic prosperity was to be maintained without sacrifice of economic hierarchy, capital accumulation would have to be re-wired to external expansion. War and conquest had to be accepted as the price of social peace at home. 'Nations', said Beard, 'are governed by their interests as their statesmen conceive those interests'. In the United States, the principal business of the state was business. Banks and corporations were the real motors of the foreign policy that had pushed America into the First World War, and were driving it towards a Second, against which Beard passionately warned.

William Appleman Williams, although he shared many of Beard's political instincts, was otherwise a very different kind of historian, who did not so much look at the material interests underlying the dynamic of American expansion, as at the rival ideals whose conflict he took as a guiding thread for understanding the history of the nation. Originally, the Pilgrim Fathers had brought the vision of a Christian Commonwealth to the New World—an

egalitarian community of small producers, whose values had never altogether disappeared, taking in later times the form of an ethical socialism. But from the Revolution onwards, an alternative vision of America's future had developed and for the most part dominated: the construction of a vast continental—and eventually overseas—empire, in which big money and hubristic ambition would thrive, under cover of fair-sounding liberal ideals of free trade and competition for all. *The Contours of American History*, Williams's major work, traces a counterpoint between these incompatible outlooks down into the epoch of the Cold War. The global battle against Communism was just the latest way in which America sought to escape abroad from the calling of what Williams believed was its true, moral self at home.

For Bacevich, each historian got the immediate political agenda of his time wrong. Beard was mistaken in opposing us entry into the Second World War, which was necessary to destroy fascism, just as Williams failed to see that it was essential to defeat Communism. But both were right in thinking that something more long-standing was at work in these conflicts. Encompassing these just causes was a larger and less attractive set of objectives, which has outlived them. Bacevich himself, as an heir to Beard and Williams, draws on different sides of their work. His tough-mindedness, of tone and judgement, descends from Beard. But his methodological focus is in many ways closer to Williams. *American Empire* does not dwell much on the nexus between internal social interests and external power-projection. Nor does it explore the mechanics of grand strategy, in the style of Gabriel Kolko, whose name is absent from the genealogy of critics Bacevich invokes, but whose works—from *The Triumph of Conservatism* to *The Politics of War* to *The Limits of Power* and beyond—represent the other major corpus of critical history and theory of imperial America, the largest of all. There could be a cultural reason for this: Kolko, based in Canada, has never shown the same attachment to popular us values as Beard or Williams.

At all events, it could be argued that the selection of legacies Bacevich has made among his forebears limits the way he stages his analytic narrative. In particular, what is not covered here are what could be called the Achesonian foundations of post-war us imperial strategy. For, as Bruce Cumings and others have shown, the turn to a huge power-projection outwards, fuelled by a very large, permanent defence industry and massive military budget, and codified doctrinally in NSC-68, occurred against the background of a serious recession in the American economy in 1949, and still high levels of union militancy. It was then, as Acheson put it, that 'Korea saved us'. The Cold War delivered a range of key domestic benefits: warfare Keynesianism as a strong alternative to and barrier against welfare Keynesianism; a powerful anti-Communist ideology for use against any form of radical dissent; a means

of providing a range of R and D and other supports to a wide spectrum of us industries; and very powerful, cross-class social constituencies in the us with a direct stake in imperial expansion. It is arguable that something similar may have been at work in the steady escalation of us financial, mercantile and military operations since the end of the Cold War. Beginning with the Gulf War under the first Bush, expanding continuously under Clinton, and now speeding up under the second Bush, the combination of American arms and arm-twisting have enforced Washington's writ across ever wider areas of land and life beyond the oceans, at a time when the stresses of enormous social polarization at home might otherwise—with the demise of the Evil Empire—have led to pressures for domestic reform and redistribution.

Bacevich does not pursue this Beardian line of analysis, but focuses instead on the ideology and instruments of the new, post-Cold War imperialism. Following Williams, Bacevich insists that the empire did not just grow like Topsy: it was the outcome of a particular world view and was built by a coherent strategy, which gained support from the American people. The key to both has been the euphemism 'liberal internationalism'—codewords for forcing the world open to American enterprise, backed by American power. But if the terrain is that of Williams, the vision is more caustic. His treatment of 'globalization', one of the great mantras of the current period, is characteristic. While it is probably no exaggeration to say that tens of thousands of academics around the world have treated the latter as a kind of new world-historical dawn, rendering obsolete much of the entire canon of the social sciences, Bacevich suggests that it can be read as both more parochial and more long-standing. The American economic expansionism that used to be expressed as 'interdependence' has been rebaptized: 'globalization' is essentially a radicalized synonym for this older term.

These are concepts that face both inwards and outwards: inwards to convince the American population of the need for economic expansion abroad rather than social transformation at home; and outwards to legitimate the drive to open other territories and markets to American business. 'How near one to the other is every part of the world. Modern inventions have brought into close relation widely separated peoples and made them better acquainted . . . Distances have been effaced . . . The world's products are being exchanged as never before . . . Isolation is no longer possible or desirable'. Anthony Giddens? No, McKinley in September 1901. Or, as Thomas Friedman put it a century later: 'Globalization-is-Us'.

One of the great merits of *American Empire* is that it makes clear how seamlessly continuous the doctrines of American supremacy have been. Those who fondly imagine there has been some major break with the recent past with the arrival of the current Republican incumbent of the White House are in for a shock from these pages. In the course of demonstrating

the key organizing concepts of imperial expansion and the discursive codes expressing them, Bacevich brings home with great cumulative force the fact that they have been held in common by Republican and Democrat leaders and presidents. Relentlessly, Bacevich piles quote upon quote from both sides of the party divide on all the key issues to demonstrate that the idea of bipartisanship is, if anything, too weak for the degree of identity between them. The anathemas against the dangers of 'isolationism', the inevitability and irreversibility of globalization, the centrality of market openness, the indispensability of American 'leadership' for the security of the world—all these tropes are repeated indistinguishably by Republicans and Democrats alike.

In this ideology, there is the characteristic slide back and forth between objective and subjective forms of legitimation. Globalization is a historical inevitability that must be accepted. Yet the United States is 'the author of history', as Madeleine Albright explained, without whose protective might it would be at risk. Bacevich is right to stress that, in fact, the most complete and fulsome versions of America's imperial mission in the world were the work of the Clinton regime, which wove its necessary internal and external, economic and military-political dimensions into a smooth whole after the rather lame efforts of its predecessor. He also has no difficulty showing that while the current Bush administration has discarded some of the rhetorical décor of the Clinton years, the basic concepts and goals of American foreign policy remain unchanged.

American Empire does more than offer an extraordinary granary of the ruling discourse, which anyone interested in the ideology of US power should read. In chapter after chapter Bacevich documents the twin tracks of expansionism in the 1990s: on one side, the opening of overseas economies and refashioning of financial institutions to US advantage, with the requisite cultural trappings; on the other, the projection of military force to keep or restore order abroad, accompanied by diplomatic strategies to discipline the other main power centres of the world. But in laying out this overall design, Bacevich devotes special attention to the area of his own professional expertise. His most original and valuable contribution to our understanding of the *modus operandi* of the Empire lies in his analysis of its military apparatus and the purposes to which this is now put.

In a striking account, Bacevich argues that the Pentagon's principal task today is closer to British gunboat diplomacy of the 19th century than to the conventional land wars of continental—principally Franco-German—descent. For what are essentially policing operations in peripheral zones, the Department of Defence has developed 21st century equivalents of both 'gunboats and Gurkhas'—that is, a combination of overwhelming air power with surrogate or mercenary forces on the ground: missiles, drones and

B-1s above, and the CIA, Northern Alliance and Kurds below. Designed to minimize American casualties, which might unsettle domestic opinion, this two-pronged strategy does not exclude the use of US infantry, where needed: an imperial armed force that has absolutely no capacity to die is hardly adequate even for the clinical operations of a post-modern Empire.

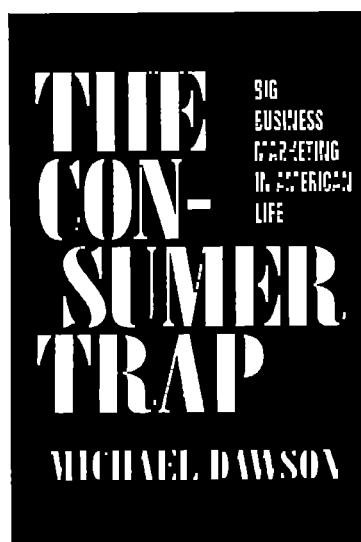
It is worth remembering that the gap in military technology between the US army and Iraqi resistance has been greater than that between the British military and the Zulus at the end of the 19th century. A handful of losses suffered in such unequal combat can even serve a purpose, since it is in the American state's interest to resocialize its population into accepting some level of battlefield casualties. In cases where these risk breaching a low ceiling, air power can always be called in to flatten the landscape instead. To date, the limitation of this kind of empire lies in its unwillingness to shoulder direct colonial administration of conquered territories for any length of time. Here it has so far needed the help of satrapies, in UN or Allied guise, to carry out routine duties, confining its own role to strategic control and direction. Such delegation is the more necessary, the greater the frequency of gunboat operations. In 1999, Bacevich points out, the US Commission on National Security reported that 'since the end of the Cold War, the United States has embarked upon nearly four dozen military interventions . . . as opposed to only 16 during the entire period of the Cold War'.

Gunboat diplomacy is not, of course, the only role for the American military. They must also maintain 'full spectrum dominance'—that is, decisive strategic superiority over all other major powers, to deter them from seeking to balance against the United States. Armed vigilance on this scale has spawned an intercontinental network of what Bacevich terms 'proconsular' powers, located in the four great regional commands, 'each presiding over vast swathes of earth, sky and water': CINCPAC (East Asia) headquartered in Hawaii; CINCSOUTH (Latin America) in Miami; CINCEUR (Europe, Africa, Israel) in Brussels; and CINCENT (Middle East, Central Asia, the Horn) in Tampa.

The commanders-in-chief of these theatres typically wield, Bacevich shows, far more political and diplomatic power than any corresponding civilian functionaries of the American state, and expect to be treated as what they are—proconsuls of a global empire, invested with vast resources and powers. 'The staffs of the European, Central and Pacific Commands each exceed the size of the Executive Office of the President. At Southern Command, the smallest of the four, the staff consists of approximately 1,100', while over the 1990s 'their combined budgets rose from \$190 million to \$381 million, with figures adjusted for inflation'. This militarization of the US outreach into the world, whose long-term effects on the shaping of American policy towards it have yet to be seen, is not exempt from its own contradictions.

Bacevich shows the way in which the loquacious and incompetent CINCPAC commander in charge of the Balkan War, Wesley Clark, had to be sidelined by his superiors in Washington, before retiring to the obsequious attentions of Michael Ignatieff and the honours of studio commentary on CNN.

Bacevich's book is a level-headed, disciplined exercise. It does not attempt, in the fashion of so much current literature on us foreign policy, to offer half-cocked theories of international relations, the world economy, popular culture, the wonders of electronic technology, or the vagaries of the domestic political system. It sets itself a carefully limited brief: to show the practical and ideological continuities of American imperial power, and the novel military dispositions it has developed since the Cold War. In these aims, it succeeds admirably. Coolly and succinctly, it dismantles most of the mystifications currently surrounding the us imperium. It is to be hoped there will be a rapid translation into Arabic.



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Margarita Tuplitsyn, *Malevich and Film*
 Yale University Press: London 2002, £30, hardback
 173pp, 0 300 09459 0

TONY WOOD

A SUPREMATIST CINEMA?

In September of 1920, Sergei Eisenstein was on his way back to Moscow from the Western front of the Russian Civil War, where he had been involved in the work of the agit-prop trains. He passed through 'a strange provincial town', around 250 miles west of Moscow in what is today Belarus.

Red brick, like many other towns of the Western region. Grimy and depressed. But this town is particularly odd. The red brick of the main streets is covered here with white paint. Green circles, orange squares and blue rectangles swarm over this white background. This is Vitebsk 1920. K. S. Malevich's brush has travelled over its brick walls.

Kazimir Malevich had arrived in the town in 1919 to teach at the art school alongside Marc Chagall, and rapidly acquired a following among the students, whom he soon organized into an avant-garde grouping called UNOVIS—Affirmers of the New Art. Vitebsk was at the forefront of artistic innovation in these frantic, pitiless years. Malevich's transformation of its architectural fabric—'Suprematist confetti scattered along the streets of a dumbfounded town', in Eisenstein's words—provided a foretaste of the invasion of Petrograd and Moscow by geometrical forms during the third anniversary celebrations of the October Revolution.

Eisenstein and Malevich met in person in the summer of 1925, in the village of Nemchinovka just outside Moscow. By this time UNOVIS had long since disbanded, and the momentum had shifted away from Suprematism and other avant-garde tendencies, in favour of groups advocating a return to conventional figuration. Malevich was battling to keep his job at GINKHUK, the Petrograd Institute for Artistic Culture. Eisenstein was working on a script entitled 1905—it would later become *Battleship Potemkin*—and in

his memoirs recalled Malevich as 'an indefatigable, stubborn and principled fighter'. He later wrote a short story based on an incident from Malevich's youth, doubtless recounted over one of the many bottles of bison-grass vodka the two shared that summer. But a much more intriguing product of the encounter was Malevich's subsequent engagement with the medium of film.

Margarita Tupitsyn's lavishly produced book, which accompanied an exhibition in Lisbon last summer and Madrid earlier this year, tracks the evolution of Malevich's attitude to film—most prominent in the essays he wrote on the subject between 1925 and 1929; the last of these, 'Painterly Laws in the Problems of Cinema', is included here, translated into English for the first time. Though his conversations with Eisenstein in 1925 acted as the immediate spur to write about cinema, Tupitsyn also seeks to demonstrate that Malevich's earlier paintings contained cinematic motifs. She concludes with a discussion of the rediscovery of Malevich, and redeployment of his formal system—above all the Black Square—by artists from both East and West in the 1960s and 70s. If Tupitsyn's loose structure enables her to make a number of suggestive connexions, it also occasionally lets the book's central theme slip from its grasp. But she sheds an intriguing, oblique light on Malevich's colossally productive and influential career.

Born in 1878, Malevich spent his childhood in Kiev and then a range of small towns in northeastern Ukraine. Though he began painting in the early 1890s, his career began in earnest in 1907, when he participated in an exhibition with Muscovite members of the avant-garde such as Natalia Goncharova, Vasilii Kandinsky and Mikhail Larionov. Malevich painted in an Impressionist mode until around 1910, but in the five years that followed he worked through an astonishing range of styles with undimmed intensity: a forceful neo-Primitivism; then a dynamic, analytical Cubo-Futurism; then Alogism, which combined Cubist dissections of the picture plane with striking juxtapositions that prefigured Dada and Surrealism. But it was his contribution to the '0,10' exhibition in December 1915 that earned Malevich almost mythical status as one of the fathers of abstraction—39 canvases emptied of all representational gestures, with bare geometrical forms floating on their white surfaces. This was what Malevich chose to call Suprematism, taking as its emblem the most pared down and yet most potent of these initial paintings: a square white canvas, dominated but not filled by a black square.

Tupitsyn suggests that Malevich's contribution to '0,10' should be viewed not as a succession of paintings but as a totality, where each canvas would be to the whole what a still is to a film; the hanging of several of the paintings vertically one below another reinforces the film-strip analogy. But this is less an argument than an eager metaphor, and there is scant evidence

to suggest that Malevich had film in mind when developing Suprematism; notions of flight, of gravity-defying leaps into other dimensions, were far more influential. Tupitsyn would arguably have done better to look for the cinematic motif in Malevich's work on the Futurist opera *Pobeda nad soln-tsem* (*Victory Over the Sun*, 1913) in which, as Aleksandra Shatskikh has pointed out, a spotlight picked out objects on stage, one after another, in a form of theatrical montage.

Between 1919 and 1922 Malevich produced a stream of texts on Suprematism—'a hard, cold, unsmiling system, set in motion by philosophical thought', as he described it in 1919—and spent the rest of his time applying that system to banners, plates, textiles and the walls of Vitebsk. Indeed, Malevich seems hardly to have painted on canvas at all for much of the 1920s, in part because he had been dedicating himself to propagating Suprematism. But there was also a sense that painting had reached a limit—his 'White on White' paintings of 1918 effectively signalling that closure. Where next? Texts of the period by Malevich and others make frequent mention of art having become architectural—its task the construction of a new world from the rubble of the old regime. The rash of geometry in Vitebsk would be one expression of the tendency; another would be the bafflingly blank, rectilinear architectural models Malevich produced between 1923 and 1929.

The first essay in which Malevich discussed film directly—'On Exposures', published in 1925—took as its subject an exhibition of film posters, which Malevich criticized on architectonic grounds. They seemed to him to have been made without a proper awareness of art's present architectural nature, and without bearing in mind the urban space they would occupy. This was the high point of NEP—a time when, as Walter Benjamin was to observe a year later, 'goods burst everywhere from the houses, they hang on fences, lean against railings, lie on pavements.' Malevich believed that Suprematism provided the necessary visual vocabulary to stand out amid the clamour, and by way of demonstration painted a poster for Eisenstein's 1924 re-edit of Fritz Lang's *Doctor Mabuse, The Gambler* (1922). Again, the signature white space, with a black circle and a blue and a red cross hovering in it; but this time words have been added, forming the words 'Doktor Mabuzo' in black letters reduced to their geometric minimum.

Both article and poster take issue with the dominant mode of poster-production of the time, Constructivist-inspired photomontage, which Malevich claimed was re-subjecting art to the representational order he had fought to overturn. But the article also advanced an argument regarding cinema itself that was to return in Malevich's subsequent essays—namely, that not only film posters, but film itself was still subject to the canons of painting. If the arrival of the cinema was a great technological development,

it had yet to develop its own artistic rules, and was still using the camera as little more than an ingenious mechanical improvement on the paint-brush. Most contemporary filmmakers, he argued in 'And Faces are Painted on the Screens' (1925), were still working within the confines of the *peredvizhniki*, the Wanderers of the 1860s and 70s, who fled academicism for a populist realism rooted in the experiences of rural life. Though he praised Eisenstein's use of contrasts, Malevich saw him too as being trapped within painterly conventions of the previous century—he compared a still from the former's work in progress, 1905, with Renoir and Manet, and argued that his use of faces to express social types drew on the peasants of the *peredvizhniki*. Dziga Vertov, on the other hand, had 'half-liberated' the viewer from the entanglement of narrative and content, showing things 'as such' in the documentary reels of *Kinopravda* (1922–25). But even he was a long way behind the development of painting, according to Malevich.

The remarkable thing about these essays is the extent to which they reflect Malevich's own painterly concerns. There is a striking unwillingness to consider the role of theatre in cinema—considerable in the USSR, since directors such as Lev Kuleshov and Eisenstein began their careers there, and the latter developed his theory of a 'montage of attractions' in relation to the stage. The use of faces in Eisenstein's films recalls above all the theatrical methods of FEEKS, the Factory of the Eccentric Actor, another early influence on Eisenstein. Malevich's ability to overlook all this doubtless stems in large measure from his utter distaste for anything resembling plot—in fact, for anything other than entirely self-sufficient systems of formal composition, such as Suprematism. But the almost obsessive focus on *peredvizhniki* has a more immediate source, since the latter were claimed as their models by the groups of realist artists that were now gaining the upper hand. Foremost among them was AKBRR, founded in 1922, which specialized in large thematic canvases depicting heroic subjects from the Revolution and Civil War, and later turned its hand to imagery of Lenin—Isaak Brodskii was a leading member. By the mid-20s, AKBRR had acquired a large membership, and more importantly the backing of the State, giving it the confidence to mount repeated attacks on the avant-garde. It was as a result of pressure from AKBRR and other groups fiercely opposed to the avant-garde that Malevich was dismissed from his post at GINKHUK in February 1926. The GINKHUK exhibition in June that year was assailed by critics as 'a cloister at the expense of the State', and criticism mounted until GINKHUK was formally dissolved that December.

Malevich's initial response—as an 'indefatigable, stubborn and principled fighter'—was to carry on in much the same vein as before, building his 'architectons' and designing volumetric homes of the future. He later devised a haunting riposte to the facial typologies of AKBRR, in the blank-faced

peasants of his paintings of 1928–30; but only after a failed attempt to wriggle out of the artistic vice in which he found himself. From March to June of 1927 he travelled abroad, taking an exhibition of his work to Warsaw and Berlin. The show, and his texts on Suprematism, were well received, and Malevich evidently had hopes that he would be able to settle in the West. On 7 April he visited the Bauhaus in Dessau, but was not offered a teaching post by its then director, Walter Gropius; he returned to the USSR disappointed—and was promptly arrested. His detention was brief, unlike the several weeks he would spend under interrogation in 1930.

In his essay on film from early 1926, 'The Artist and the Cinema', Malevich had referred to the need to introduce abstraction into film, as the only way of overturning representational culture. Western artists had already begun to work in this mode, he observed, and though he mentioned no one by name, it is highly likely he was thinking of the *Rhythm* series by Hans Richter, in which animated geometrical forms pulsate and morph into one another. Richter and Malevich met during the latter's visit to the Bauhaus, where he would have watched the *Rhythm* films in full for the first time. The experience gave rise to the idea that he and Richter should collaborate on 'An Artistic and Scientific Film—Painting and Architectural Issues—Approaching the New Plastic Architecture', as Malevich clumsily titled the three-page treatment he wrote, but did not finish, before leaving Germany. The document was among the papers Malevich left in the care of his friends, the von Riesens, on his departure. It was unearthed in 1952 by demolition workers sifting through the rubble of the von Riesens' house in Berlin, and was published in German along with others of Malevich's writings in 1962. Richter had emigrated to the US in 1939, and only got hold of Malevich's script in the late 1960s. Together with the documentary filmmaker Arnold Eagle, Richter tried several times to make the film—securing NEA funding in 1971—but left only a pile of storyboards, slides and unfinished film on his death in 1976. Eagle's efforts over the next six years similarly came to nothing.

Richter made several trips to the USSR in the early 1930s while working on *Metal*, a joint German–Soviet production about a strike in an iron factory. The project—abandoned due to interference from both sides—obviously recalls Eisenstein's first film *Stachka* (*Strike*, 1924). The two had met in Paris in 1929, and Richter co-wrote the script for *Metal* with Pera Atasheva, Eisenstein's future wife. On one of his trips to the USSR Richter met up with Malevich again—all with cancer from 1933 until his death in 1935—though it is not known if they discussed the film project. In the last phase of his career Malevich had returned to the easel, executing eerie landscapes peopled by faceless peasants and, later, portraits of his friends and family in Quattrocento poses and Suprematist clothes.

These are among his strongest works, combining a forceful Suprematist handling of colour with the uncanny composition of de Chirico. But if the voided expressions of the peasant figures can be read as a bleak commentary on the collectivization then ravaging Malevich's native Ukraine, they also testify to a shift in Malevich's opinion—that only abstraction could adequately express the new realities of industrialized life. This belief is in evidence in the last two essays Malevich wrote on film, the unpublished 'The Cinema, Gramophone, Radio and Artistic Culture' (1928), and 'Painterly Laws in the Problems of Cinema' (1929). The former once again argued that cinema was still working within the confines of painting, and advocated a non-objective cinema 'based on pure aesthetic sensation'; the latter again attacked Eisenstein for *peredvizhnichestvo*, but praised Vertov's *Eleventh Year* (1928) for its 'incorruptible sincerity'. Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) was also applauded for its dynamism, its 'dissolution of objects in time', which Malevich saw as akin to the Futurism of Umberto Boccioni and Giacomo Balla. Consistently enough, however, Malevich also argued that Vertov was still several stages behind the evolution of painting, and the 'abstract moments'—the hypnotic shots of pumping pistons and whirring wheels—were still surrounded by the documentary 'junk' of the everyday.

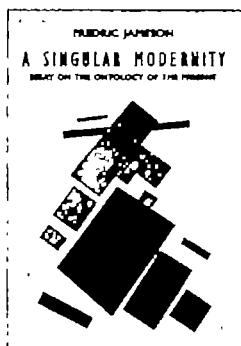
Aside from an amusing hostility to Monty Banks, the hero of Hollywood blockbusters of the 1910s and 20s, the most striking aspect of this last essay is its moving, and prophetic, defence of Vertov. Malevich pleads Vertov's case, saying that his continued work is the best hope for cinematic innovation: 'for we should not forget that the content of our era cannot be reduced to showing pigs being fattened on a *Sovkhoz*, or "golden cornfields" being harvested. There is yet another content—that of *pure form and dynamics*.' Malevich's fears were, however, sadly borne out: the future trajectory of Soviet cinema was precisely that of fattened pigs and endless fields of corn.

Vertov was an important influence on artists of the 1960s and 70s such as Richard Serra, whose film *Hand Catching Lead* (1968) derives its rhythm from a repeated action in a fashion analogous to Vertov's dynamism of industrial machinery. But Tupitsyn's discussion of Malevich's influence on the art of the neo-avant-garde—Serra, Sol Lewitt, Robert Rauschenberg, Art & Language, On Kawara—and Soviet Sotsart—Komar and Melamid, Ilya Kabakov, Erik Bulatov—is focused overwhelmingly on the afterlife of the Black Square and Suprematist geometry. Malevich's ideas about film have all but disappeared. Tupitsyn has little to say about their later influence or validity—perhaps because they were not even taken seriously by filmmakers at the time. In his essay on 'The Fourth Dimension in Film' (1929), Eisenstein was dismissive: 'To discuss cinematography in terms of easel painting is naive . . . although it is possible for people to discuss and analyse film using Kazimir Malevich's

statements, not even an incompetent film student would venture to examine 'film frames' from the point of view of easel painting.'

Indeed, what is left unsaid in Tupitsyn's account is that Malevich's analysis of film sheds little light on the pressing cinematic debates of the time—Eisenstein's rhythmic montage versus Vertov's theory of intervals, narrative versus factography. Rather, he seems to have transferred the painterly battles he was engaged in to the realm of cinema, with scant regard for the intrinsic properties of the film medium. It is his obsessive antagonism towards representation that comes to the fore here. Malevich was stubborn to the point of solipsism, seeing any deviation from abstraction as a reversal of the avant-garde's triumph. Whether his return to figuration in the late 1920s marks an embrace of defeat or a subversive, dialectical response to the return of representational art, is open to question. But he clearly never accorded cinema the independent life ascribed to it by his friend Hans Richter, who recalled in the 1960s that film was 'not only a region for a painter's experiments, but a part of modern art, the expression of a new total experience'.

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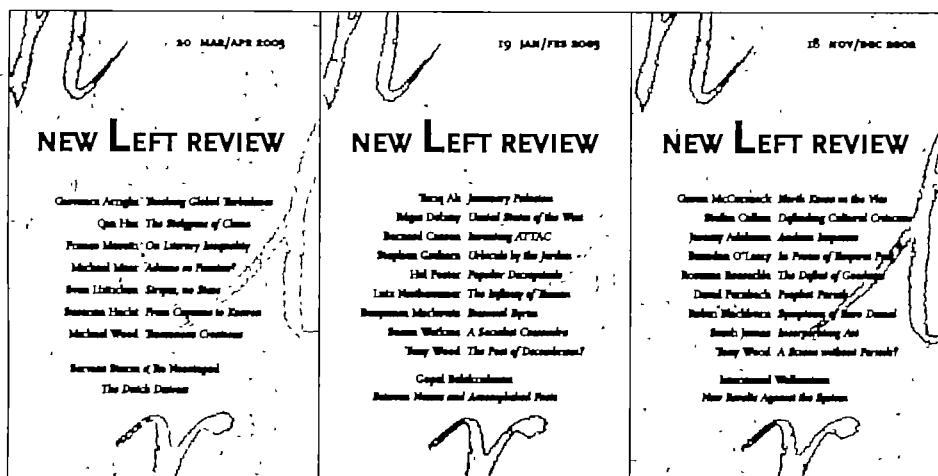
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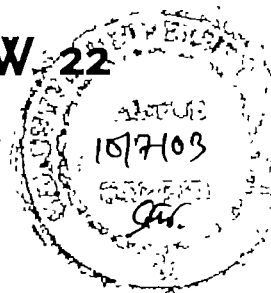
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WHAT'S WRONG WITH EUROPE?

THE EUROPEAN ECONOMY is in very poor shape.¹ Germany appears to be in recession and growth is at a virtual standstill elsewhere on the Continent. The European Central Bank's monetary policy is too restrictive while fiscal policy is constrained by the infamous Stability Pact, which is perversely forcing countries to reduce their budget deficits at a time of economic slowdown. Finally, unemployment, already high, is rising again and welfare provisions are progressively being eroded. Against this stands the apparent dynamism of the developed English-speaking world. Quite apart from the remarkable records of Ireland, Australia and Canada (three countries that have witnessed rapid and uninterrupted growth for at least a decade), both the United States and Britain can boast of a very successful economic performance. They seem to have been more resilient to the bursting of the high-tech bubble, have clearly benefited from more flexible macroeconomic policies, and have been at, or close to, full employment for a number of years. It would thus appear that liberal, deregulated market systems function incomparably better than the more consensual, but also much more rigid, Continental economies. And Japan's dismal performance over the last decade further strengthens this conclusion.

As with all broad-brush pictures, the previous paragraph is right in part, but also contains a number of simplifications, exaggerations and half-truths. For one thing, first-hand impressions are often dominated by recent events and fail to take a longer-run perspective. If this is done, the relative merits and demerits of Anglo-American versus Continental systems are much less apparent. For another, the picture omits to mention that the recent successes of the us and Britain are not fully sustainable. In both countries, the growth in output and the decline in unemployment were in large part driven by an accumulation of household debt

that has reduced personal savings to exceptionally low levels. Rising house prices have been one major reason for these trends. As house prices subside and families restore their savings to more normal levels, a sharp slowdown in consumer demand is highly likely.

Yet even taking such a correction into account, the Eurozone's growth and unemployment performance still looks relatively poor in both a short and medium-term perspective. Indeed, the bursting of America's borrowing binge could worsen it further. It is not only American families that have over-borrowed, but the us economy as a whole. This has led to what most observers consider to be an unsustainable current-account deficit whose correction will require a substantial weakening of the dollar, a process that has already begun. Dollar depreciation will help the us, by raising both competitiveness and prices—a novel aim now that some countries are in fear of deflation. It will, however, hurt (and is already hurting) a European economy for which exports have been one of the few sources of strength. Weakening competitiveness, in other words, is adding to Europe's economic problems and is highly likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

This brief paper begins by surveying the comparative record over the last three decades, suggesting that this is much more uniform across the major areas than might be thought. It then examines the usual arguments that have been put forward to criticize the Continental model (and praise the Anglo-American one) and finds that while some are, indeed, valid, particularly in the area of economic policy-making, others are found wanting. It finally provides a brief look into the future which, if only for demographic reasons, looks bound to be less dynamic in Europe than was the past.

Transatlantic comparisons

That Continental European performance has recently been sluggish is undeniable. In the three years that have followed the cyclical peak of 2000, growth may have averaged barely 1 per cent per annum, a record almost worthy of Japan's 0.5 per cent and well below the nearly 2 per cent growth rates of the United States and Britain.³ Yet, if one takes a

³ The author would like to thank, but not implicate, Andrew Glyn and Chris Allsopp for helpful comments.

⁴ 2003 figures are based on forecasts prepared by Oxford Economic Forecasting.

somewhat longer view, the picture is not as stark. Table 1 traces the GDP growth record between 1973, the year which many argue marked the end of the postwar 'Golden Age', and 2003.

TABLE 1: *Longer-run economic performance, 1973–2003*

	Growth of		Rate of
	GDP	GDP per capita	unemployment
Eurozone	2.3	2.0	7.9
United States	3.0	1.6	6.4
Britain	2.3	2.0	7.3
Japan	3.0	2.5	2.9

Sources: oecd Data Bank, European Commission, *European Economy* and Oxford Economic Forecasting for 2002–03 estimates and forecasts. GDP figures are trend growth rates and the rate of unemployment is as a percentage of the labour force.

Over these three decades, Eurozone and British growth are the same and not much below those of Japan and the us. The latter's apparent dynamism, however, owes much to demographic expansion. If population trends are taken into account, the growth of per capita GDP turns out to have been higher in Europe than it was in America. And it is, surely, the rise in living standards that ultimately determines whether countries are, or are not, economically successful.

Three features, however, could modify this conclusion. First, even if per capita GDP has been rising at broadly the same rate throughout the rich world, living standards are still quite different. In particular, Continental Europe (but also Britain and Japan) lag significantly behind the us. Comparisons of GDP per capita made in purchasing power parity, whether by the oecd or the World Bank, suggest that Americans were, in the early years of the twenty-first century, still some 30 per cent richer than Continental Europeans. In other words, one might have expected per capita GDP to have grown a good deal more rapidly in the Eurozone over the last three decades than in the us, as it had done during the 'Golden Age', so as to pursue a process of gradual catch-up.

Second, not only has there been no significant growth differential in favour of Europe, but over the last decade any such differential has virtually disappeared. While Eurozone growth decelerated, us growth accelerated. This has been true not only for GDP per capita, but also, and more importantly, for the growth rate of labour productivity, the ultimate determinant of living standards. Should such trends continue, as many expect, the gap between the two areas would widen further. Thirdly, Europe's record is, in addition, blighted by the significantly higher unemployment rate from which it has suffered since the early 1970s, in contrast to its much more favourable 'Golden Age' performance. Indeed, Europe's relative position in this area has progressively worsened. While in the later 1970s and the 1980s, its rate of unemployment was not that different from the Anglo-American one, by the late 1990s and the first years of the new century the gap had become substantial. Thus, in 2000–03 both the us and the UK (as well as Japan) could boast of an unemployment rate, on comparable definitions, of only 5 per cent, while the Eurozone persisted with a jobless rate of as much as 8.5 per cent (and rising).

Of these three problems, it turns out that the first one is the least significant, since the official data may in good part belie reality. Table 2, opposite, looks in greater detail at the difference in living standards between the us and the Eurozone. It begins by showing the gap in purchasing power parity estimates mentioned above, and then accounts for it by means of a simple identity which allocates this difference to three major factors. First, Europeans are poorer than Americans because fewer of them work. The employment rate—that is, the share of the population that has a job—is notably lower on the Continent than it is in North America (by as much as 15 percentage points). Second, they are also poorer because the workers that are in employment work a significantly shorter number of hours: 15 per cent again. And thirdly, they are poorer because their hourly productivity is lower than that of their counterparts in the United States.

Surprisingly, perhaps, this last factor is not that important. The productivity of an hour's work turns out to be very similar across the two sides of the Atlantic (though not across the Channel).³ The over-regulated,

³ A similar set of estimates for Britain puts GDP per capita in PPP at 71 per cent of the us level, just marginally above the Eurozone estimate, but the productivity of an hour's work at only 81 per cent, significantly below the Continent's 96 per cent.

over-unionized and over-welfarized Continental European worker is actually almost as productive as his or her American counterpart, a finding that must throw into doubt some, at least, of the economist's conventional wisdom about the great benefits of ultra-liberalism. It is clearly the two labour market features that overwhelmingly lie behind Europe's lower living standards.

TABLE 2: *Living standards in Europe as a percentage of us levels*

	1999–2001
GDP per capita in PPP	69
due to: ^a	
employment ratio ^b	84
hours worked	86
GDP per hour worked	96
Allow for greater European preference for leisure (as 50% of the EZ–US difference in employment ratio and hours worked)	+15
GDP per capita in PPP—adjustment 1	84
Allow for greater US spending on climate, transport, security, etc. (as 7½% of the EZ–US difference)	+7½
GDP per capita in PPP—adjustment 2	92

^a The difference between the two areas' GDP per capita can be explained by the following identity: $Y/P = N/P \times H/N \times Y/H$, where Y is GDP, P is population, N is employment, and H the number of hours worked per year.

^b Share of total population in employment

Source: Author's estimates, using data from OECD Data Bank; figures are rounded

There are several reasons why Europe's employment rate is below that of America—and of Britain too, for that matter. One is the already mentioned significantly higher unemployment rate in the Eurozone. This, in turn, may also lower the propensity to work among segments of the population discouraged by the likely difficulty of finding a job. And fewer people may be working because of mistaken attempts on the part of governments in a number of countries to encourage early retirement so as to keep the unemployment count down. These various features clearly point to an unsatisfactory functioning of labour markets in Europe

compared to America. Two other elements, however, must also play a role. One is Europe's somewhat less favourable demographic structure, with a higher share of the population aged 65 or more.⁴ The other is—or at least could be—a greater preference, on the part of women in particular, for less work and more leisure. It is a moot point, of course, how much of this greater preference is voluntarily chosen and how much is imposed by the absence of work opportunities, alternative childcare facilities or other obstacles. Yet, given that publicly financed nurseries, for instance, are a good deal more widespread on the Continent than they are in the United States or Britain, some at least of the lower labour supply may well reflect a conscious choice. In so far as this is the case, while measured living standards would be negatively affected, underlying welfare should not be.

Turning to working hours, Europe's lower levels are also bound to reflect a mixture of regulation and free choice. The length of the working week is significantly shorter in many European countries because governments may have tried to restrict it. The ill-advised imposition by the former French government of a 35-hour week is the most glaring example of such interference, no doubt welcomed by some workers, but not by all. Interestingly, a similar proposal was put forward by the Italian government in the late 1990s but was then promptly shelved, with the virtually unanimous support not only of politicians and employers, but also of the country's trade unions. Yet, as so many negotiations on employment conditions have shown, European workers do appear to have a much stronger preference for shorter working hours and longer holidays than do their American or British counterparts. In this instance, too, therefore, the lower measured living standards that shorter working hours produce may, at least in part, not have a corresponding negative effect on people's welfare.

Trying to split Europe's lower work effort, in terms of both lower participation in the workforce and fewer hours worked, into a willingly chosen component of a greater preference for leisure and a government or institutional component of greater regulation and involuntary idleness, would seem to be impossibly difficult. The importance so often given to working hours in union negotiations on the Continent militates for an adjustment that privileges a different work-leisure preference. This author's

⁴ In 2000, 16.5 per cent of the Eurozone's population was aged 65 or more, as against 12.5 per cent in the US, and 15.5 per cent in the UK.

admittedly totally arbitrary split allocates half of the variation between American and European work patterns to such a choice, as well as to the difference in demographic structures. As a result, an adjusted welfare comparison would suggest that the gap in living standards between the two areas is of the order of perhaps 15 rather than 30 per cent.

American living costs

Even this gap could realistically be reduced, along the lines recently suggested by the American economist, Robert Gordon.⁵ Looking at us and European spending patterns, Gordon plausibly argues that Americans are actually forced to devote more of their expenditure to things that Europeans do not need to the same extent. He points, in particular, to climate, transport and security. The more extreme meteorology of North America means that, to achieve similar levels of comfort to those in Europe, more needs to be spent on heating and cooling. This boosts GDP but clearly not welfare relative to European levels. Similarly, lack of public transport forces Americans to spend a great deal more than Europeans on car journeys to and from work. Finally, higher levels of crime in the us generate greater public and private spending on security measures. To this list, the present author would also add the greater litigiousness of American society, compared to the higher level of trusts prevalent in Europe, in part thanks to the longer-term relationships fostered by a different system of corporate governance. This too adds significant layers of expenditure on legal services which boost American GDP but, arguably, not only do not add value, but possibly subtract from it.

This list could no doubt be extended and there may, of course, also be examples going in the opposite direction. How to quantify these various factors is, again, impossibly difficult. Gordon provides a very rough estimate that argues for a 7 to 8 per cent adjustment to America's GDP relative to that of Europe. It is this stab that is incorporated in Table 2. The final figure that is obtained thus suggests that the difference in living standards between the United States and Continental Europe, once allowance has been made for a greater preference for leisure and for 'unnecessary' spending in America, is of less than 10 per cent, and could even be close to zero, compared to the 30 per cent gap provided by the official figures. It is true that this high average living standard

⁵ 'Three Centuries of Economic Growth: Europe Chasing the American Frontier', available at <http://faculty-web.at.northwestern.edu>

is marred by the presence of a significantly higher rate of unemployment, but then in the us a similarly high living standard conceals a shocking degree of income inequality.⁶ And, as was plausibly argued by Ralf Dahrendorf, 'I for one would probably prefer to be unemployed in Europe than be poor in America'.⁷

Continental depression

The preceding section has argued that if somewhat arbitrary, but hardly implausible, adjustments are made, Eurozone citizens are virtually as rich as are Americans. Yet it remains true that the Eurozone's economic record has been far from satisfactory in recent years when compared to that of the us and Britain. Three features in particular were stressed: a much higher rate of unemployment and significantly lower growth rates of both output and productivity. Table 3 illustrates this and points to the growing gap in performance between the Eurozone (and Japan) on the one hand, and the Anglo-American economies on the other, particularly in the 1990s and in the early years of this century.

One potential reason for such diverging trends can be readily dismissed. The Eurozone has not, until very recently, suffered from declining international competitiveness. On the contrary, it is the dollar that has appreciated in the second half of the 1990s, as has the pound, while the Euro (or the currencies that preceded it) have fallen as shown in Figure 1, opposite. This picture is now changing quite rapidly; but for the recent past, at least, Europe's unsatisfactory record must have been caused by other forces. Two major ones have often been put forward by economists. The first, coming from the orthodox, or neo-classical, wing points an accusing finger at the alleged rigidities of Europe's institutions—at its web of constraining regulations, at its far too generous and open-ended welfare benefits, at its conservative trade unions—and contrasts this with the nimble, agile, de-regulated economies of Britain and North America. At the opposite side of the (economist's) ideological spectrum, observers in the Keynesian mould see restrictive

⁶ To take just one example from the World Bank's *World Development Report*, 2002: in 1997 the incomes of America's top decile were 17 times larger than those of the country's bottom decile. In the Eurozone in the 1990s the same ratio was only 7.5 (and 4.5 in Japan, but 10.5 in Britain).

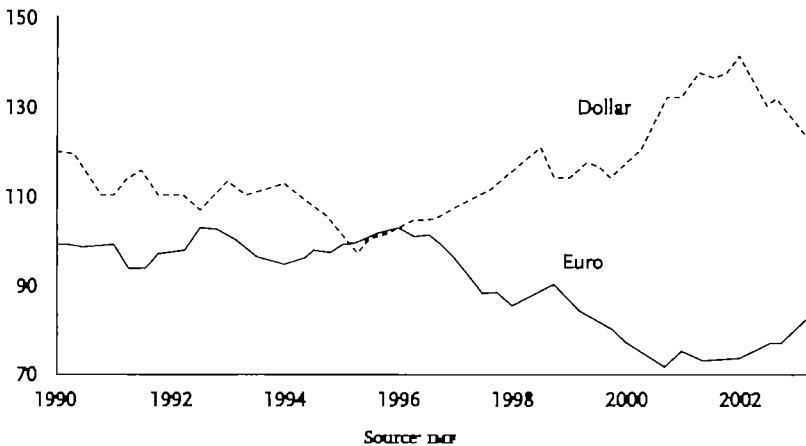
⁷ Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Comments on Paper by Paul R. Krugman', in Robert Lawrence and Charles Schultze, eds., *Barriers to European Growth*, Washington, DC 1987, p. 78.

TABLE 3: *Europe's worsening economic performance, 1973–2003*

		<i>Eurozone</i>	<i>US</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Japan</i>
<i>GDP growth</i>	1973–1990	2.3	3.0	2.1	3.8
	1990–2003	2.1	3.2	2.6	1.1
	1999–2003*	1.6	2.2	2.2	1.0
<i>Growth of GDP per capita</i>	1973–1990	2.0	1.8	2.0	3.0
	1990–2003	1.7	1.6	2.2	0.9
	1999–2003*	1.4	1.6	1.8	0.6
<i>Growth of business sector hourly productivity</i>	1973–1990	2.9	1.2	2.6	3.0
	1990–2003	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.7
	1999–2003*	1.6	2.2	1.7	1.1
<i>Unemployment rate (percentage of labour force)</i>	1974–1990	6.8	7.0	7.5	2.3
	1991–2003	9.4	5.6	7.2	3.8
	2000–2003	8.3	5.1	5.1	5.1

* Average annual percentage changes.

Sources: oecd Data Bank, European Commission, *European Economy* and Oxford Economic Forecasting for 2002–03 estimates and forecasts. All growth rates are trend growth rates

FIGURE 1: *Real exchange rates (1995 = 100)*

macroeconomic policies as the main culprit. The fiscal deflation imposed by the tight criteria that had to be met in order to satisfy the Maastricht Treaty's conditions for joining European Monetary Union, plunged the Eurozone into slow growth through much of the 1990s. The overcautious monetary policy followed by the ECB since the start of EMU, and the absurd constraints imposed on fiscal policy by the EU's Stability Pact, have kept the area in low growth since then. Both of these explanations contain elements of truth, but neither is fully satisfactory.

Over-regulated?

It would seem difficult to put most of the blame for Europe's unsatisfactory labour-market record on restrictive policies curbing the growth of output and hence of employment. No doubt, a more expansionary stance would have had some positive impact, but it still remains true that from cyclical peak to cyclical peak—at times, in other words, when growth was rapid—unemployment rose in the Eurozone. Thus, in 1972–73 it stood at some 2.5 per cent of the labour force, in 1979–80 at 5.5 per cent, in 1989–90 at 8 per cent and in 1999–2000 at 9 per cent (contrast this with the US which saw unemployment going in the opposite direction: from 6.5 per cent in the late 1970s, to 5.5 per cent in the late 1980s, to only 4 per cent during the last boom). Indeed, the wide variety of Europe's unemployment experiences supports this general point. Growth was weak over most of the Continent, yet countries such as Austria, Norway or Switzerland can today boast of unemployment outcomes better than those of the United States, while in countries such as Greece or Spain unemployment rates are in double digits.

Differences in institutions appear to be a more likely cause and, among these, excessive regulatory restraints could play a role. Labour market protection, in particular, is much more pronounced in France, Germany, Italy or Spain than it is in the US or UK, and some of its features are likely to have inhibited the growth of employment.⁸ Comparative research in

⁸ In all these countries, for instance, firing workers is very difficult, except for smaller firms which are usually exempted from such protective legislation for understandable reasons—in times of recession they can hardly redeploy labour to other parts of the business as can, theoretically at least, larger establishments, nor can they easily borrow from financial institutions to pay for an excessive wage bill. The definition of a small firm varies, however, from a reasonable 'less than 25 workers' in Spain to a more restrictive 'less than 15' and 'less than 11' workers in Italy and France respectively, to an absurdly small 'less than 6 workers' in Germany.

this area, not all of which is ideologically tainted, has also pointed to the unemployment boosting effects, not so much of generous unemployment benefit systems *per se*, but of 'unemployment benefits that are allowed to run on indefinitely, combined with little or no pressure on the unemployed to obtain work'.⁹ And the same research has suggested that high taxes impinging on labour have also played a negative role. Unions, on the other hand, despite much economic conventional wisdom, need not contribute to high unemployment. Much depends on how wages are negotiated. Coordinated bargaining across the whole economy, for instance, can well be very beneficial.¹⁰

Indeed, two of the most successful Eurozone economies over the last decade, Ireland and the Netherlands—neither of which, and especially not the latter, are models of unfettered liberalism—owe much of their spectacular results in reducing unemployment from erstwhile very high levels to precisely this factor: coordinated wage rounds. Both countries, by engaging in that ultimate corporatist sin, incomes policies, agreed upon by the various social partners, achieved rapid output growth, a strong profit and competitive performance, and also rapid rises in employment levels and in real wages.¹¹ Conversely, New Zealand, a country that, far from sinning, fulfilled with almost religious fervour all the orthodox prescriptions of labour market deregulation, had a macroeconomic and employment performance that can, at best, only be described as mediocre.¹²

What all this suggests is that no single factor can fully account for the wide variety of unemployment performances across Europe. In some cases, institutional rigidities and labour-market restrictions may have been at work, as orthodox theory suggests. In other cases, however, similar rigidities have co-existed with much better labour market outcomes.

⁹ Stephen Nickell, 'Unemployment and Labor Market Rigidities: Europe versus North America', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Summer 1997), p. 72.

¹⁰ Lars Calmfors and John Driffill, 'Bargaining Structure, Corporatism and Macroeconomic Performance', *Economic Policy*, April 1988.

¹¹ Dutch unemployment, recently the lowest in the OECD area, was also reduced by a very successful drive to encourage part-time employment. This now accounts for as much as one-third of the country's workforce.

¹² Andrew Glyn, 'Labour Market Success and Labour Market Reform: Lessons from Ireland and New Zealand', in David Howell, ed., *Unemployment and the Welfare State. International Perspectives on the Limits of Labour Market Deregulation*, New York (forthcoming).

And this is indirectly confirmed by the absence of strong statistical relationships between most standard measures of labour-market regulation and performance.¹³ These are often weak or non-existent, and cannot justify the strong policy recommendations in favour of unfettered deregulation that international organizations such as the OECD have been preaching for years.

Macroeconomic restraints

The view that excessively restrictive macroeconomic policies have stifled Eurozone growth looks more attractive. In the recent past, the ECB's continuing, yet clearly outdated, concern with inflation—let alone the pro-cyclical workings of fiscal policy in countries such as Germany or Portugal—stand in marked contrast to the much more flexible action of the American and British central banks and the expansionary tax and expenditure policies followed by those countries' fiscal authorities. Yet even here, the picture is not quite as clear-cut. As argued earlier, Europe's lag predates the last few years. Throughout the 1990s, when both the US and Britain were growing rapidly, macroeconomic policies were probably not that different.

Quantifying economic policy stances is not easy. Table 4, opposite, looks at three rough measures. The top part shows OECD estimates of changes in the structural budget balance, an indicator that abstracts from the effects of cyclical fluctuations on government taxes and expenditures. As will be seen, fiscal consolidation was pursued through the 1990s not only in the Maastricht-constrained Eurozone countries, but also in Britain and, particularly, in Clinton's America. Only Japan was a clear exception and few would argue that that country's expansionary fiscal policies were a resounding success. Turning to monetary policy, the table shows the behaviour of nominal short-term interest rates—the instrument directly in the hands of the authorities. Here the data would suggest that the Eurozone and Britain too, for that matter, have consistently been more

¹³ A recent and very thorough review of the literature claiming that regulation raises unemployment concluded that there was 'a yawning gap between the confidence with which the case for labour market deregulation has been asserted and the evidence that the regulating institutions are the culprits'; see Dean Baker, Andrew Glyn, David Howell and John Schmitt, 'Labour Market Institutions and Unemployment: A Critical Assessment of the Cross-Country Evidence', in Howell, ed., *Unemployment and the Welfare State*.

TABLE 4: *Monetary and fiscal policy stances, 1979–2003*

		<i>Eurozone</i>	<i>US</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Japan</i>
<i>Changes in cyclically adjusted budget balance^a</i>	1979–1989	0.3	–2.2	2.3	5.3
	1989–1999	3.4	3.9	2.5	–8.2
	1999–2003	–0.2	–2.7	–2.2	–0.2
<i>Short term nominal interest rate</i>	1980–1989	11.2	8.8	12.0	6.4
	1990–1999	7.2	4.9	8.0	2.9
	2000–2003	3.6	3.1	4.7	0.2
<i>Long term real interest rate^b</i>	1980–1989	3.9	5.6	3.6	4.2
	1990–1999	4.5	4.3	4.2	3.0
	2000–2003	3.1	3.1	2.6	2.7

^a oecd estimates, in per cent of gdp; negative figure indicates expansionary effect

^b Deflated by gdp deflator

Sources: oecd Data Bank and Oxford Economic Forecasting for 2002–03 interest rate estimates and forecasts

restrictive than the United States. Yet what really matters to economic activity is the behaviour of real interest rates (net of inflation). The imperfect estimates that are presented for this variable indicate that in this instance, too, the differences between the monetary policy stances of the various areas under consideration were relatively small through the whole of the 1990s.¹⁴ Real interest rates, at 4 to 4.5 per cent, were high everywhere, although Japan is, again, a partial exception.

It is true, however, that if one turns to the early years of this decade, the differences are more marked. Monetary and fiscal policies have become clearly expansionary in both Britain and the United States, while this has hardly been the case in the Eurozone, particularly on the fiscal front: and this despite a much more sluggish economic picture. Simulations made on the macroeconomic model of Oxford Economic Forecasting suggest that if Continental Europe had followed America's monetary policy and

¹⁴ Interest rates have been here deflated by actual inflation. Ideally, however, and if the data were available (which they are not) one should use expected rather than ex-post inflation.

had taken some liberties with the Stability Pact, its growth in 2001–03 would have been twice as rapid as it actually was.¹⁵ Rather than the 1 per cent per annum recorded, growth would have been at 2 per cent, while budget deficits, thanks to a more rapid expansion of the tax base, would have widened only marginally. Faster growth would also have reduced unemployment this year to some 7.5 per cent of the labour force instead of the expected nearly 9 per cent level. These are significant differences.

Europe's decelerating productivity

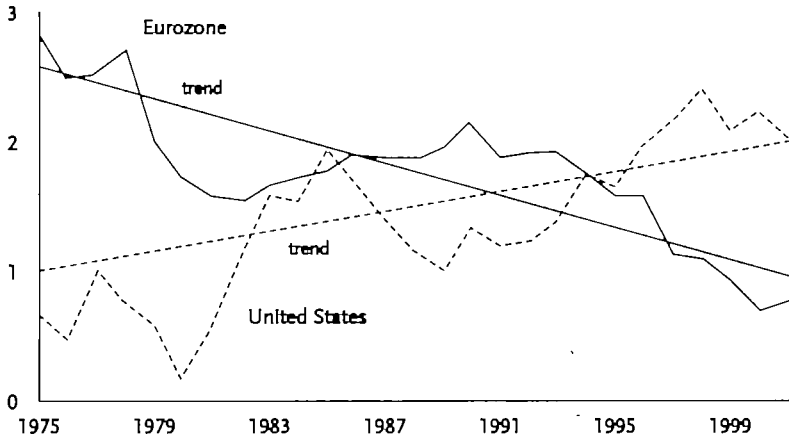
The most worrying aspect of the Continent's sluggishness has been the slowdown in productivity growth shown opposite, in Figure 2. It is in this area that one might have expected the orthodox approach to be vindicated. The variations in regulatory regimes must surely be one of the major reasons for differences in efficiency. Yet as was shown above, productivity *levels* are quite similar across the Atlantic despite very dissimilar institutional set-ups. And these arrangements would seem to be even less responsible for differences in productivity *growth rates*. After all, throughout Europe the last 10 to 15 years have seen a crusade in favour of deregulation. Free trade has been promoted by, *inter alia*, the 1992 programme, controls on capital movements have been abolished and the EMU's capital market has been, at least partially, deregulated. In addition, and depending on country, unemployment and other welfare benefits have been cut, trade union power has declined, private pension provisions have been introduced or strengthened, taxes on labour have been reduced, bureaucratic impediments to flexible shop openings, to business creation, or to atypical forms of employment (for example part-time or temporary) have been eased. In other words, Continental Europe has actually come closer to the Anglo-American model and this, if the orthodox view is right, should have led to faster rather than slower growth.

Almost paradoxically, in fact, the slowdown in Europe's productivity growth is in part due to precisely the deregulation that so many liberal economists keep advocating as the surest way out of Eurosclerosis. By loosening some labour market regulations, this process, to give it its

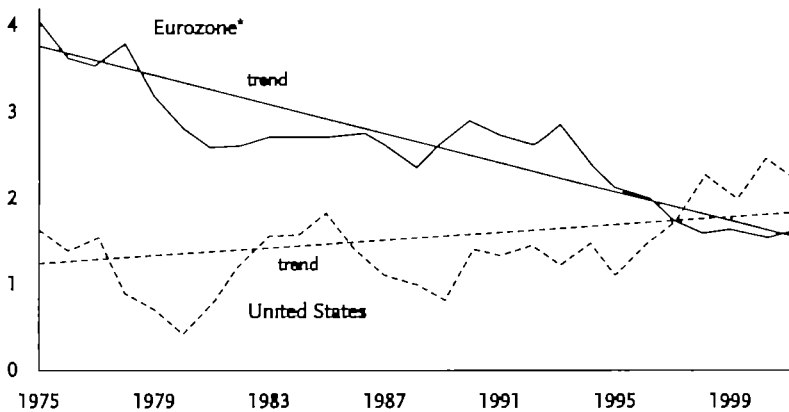
¹⁵ For fiscal policy it was assumed that the three major countries would not wish to break entirely with the Stability Pact, but would reformulate it in terms of cyclically adjusted budget balances, and would aim not to reduce these—given the difficult economic situation—but actually raise them to as much as 2.9 per cent of GDP in 2002–03.

FIGURE 2: *Productivity growth*

A. GDP per employed, 5-year moving averages



B. Business sector output per hour worked, 5-year moving averages



* Excluding Austria, Portugal and Greece.
Source: OECD Data Bank

due, has encouraged hiring in numerous European countries—France and Spain, as well as the Netherlands, are the most obvious examples. That, in turn, by raising employment, often in service sectors in which productivity grows rather slowly or is very difficult to measure, has lowered the growth of output per worker. Employment gains have been traded off for productivity ‘losses’. However welcome the first of these effects is, it stands in sharp contrast to the experience of the US economy, which has been able both to create numerous jobs *and* raise its growth rate of productivity.

It is here that a faster growth rate of overall output would have helped. Had reforms been accompanied by the more expansionary policies that were incorporated in the simulation described above, it is not impossible that Europe’s GDP and employment performance over the last few years could have matched that of Anglo-America. Yet the reforming zeal was accompanied by a stubborn belief that financial orthodoxy, on both the monetary and fiscal fronts, would deliver the nirvana of stable non-inflationary growth. It delivered instead semi-stagnation, rising unemployment, falling profits and the threat of deflation, while allowing a boom and bust stock-market bubble that was even larger, in proportionate terms, than its Wall Street equivalent. In many ways, Continental Europe has abdicated its responsibilities for macroeconomic policy, in sharp contrast to both American and Japanese practices. Seen from the outside, the Eurozone looks almost like a developing country on which the IMF has imposed one of those rigid stabilization programmes for which it is so famous: low inflation, fiscal rectitude, deregulation and privatization, all run by a bunch of non-elected officials (Duisenberg, Solbes, Monti and Bolkestein).¹⁶

Global competition and ‘new’ economy

Yet, the recent past’s overly restrictive policies, however damaging, cannot fully explain a medium-term deceleration in productivity growth. Had output growth been faster it is possible that, through a relationship much discussed in the 1950s and 1960s and known as ‘Verdoorn’s Law’, there would have been a positive feedback onto productivity growth. Since, however, this relationship applies primarily to the manufacturing sector, it is likely to have lost much of its force in today’s economies, in

¹⁶ This analogy was suggested to the author by Jean-Paul Fitoussi.

which industry's weight is rapidly declining. More importantly, however, it was pointed out above that over the 1990s as a whole, policy stances were not that different between the United States and the Eurozone, yet productivity performance was. Forces other than excessively restrictive policies, or an ongoing process of deregulation, must lie behind Europe's worsening performance in this area.

One possible factor may be linked to the process of globalization. The surge of East Asian, and especially Chinese, manufactured exports has been largely beneficial for developing and developed countries alike, but it has also accelerated deindustrialization everywhere in the OECD area. This decline in manufacturing production has reduced the share in the economy of the sector with the most rapid growth in productivity. Since this sector was (and still is) much larger on the Continent and in Japan than in the United States, the impact was bound to be felt more severely in the Eurozone economies. And this is the more so as import penetration from China actually increased somewhat more rapidly in these economies than it did in either the US or Britain.

A second force that may also have been at work in opening a gap between American and European performance may, paradoxically, have been the 'new economy' revolution. Behind all the hype that fed the unsustainable stock-market bubble, there nonetheless lies some reality. The new information and communication technologies have the power to improve productivity performance and have almost certainly done so, at least in certain sectors. Yet it does appear that, largely for institutional reasons, such successes have been much more prominent in the US than in Europe or Japan. One reason for this lies almost certainly in the much greater ease with which new companies can be created in America, in contrast to the countless bureaucratic restrictions that plague the Continental economies.⁷ Another is the difference in financial systems. Complex inter-firm, or firm-bank, relations, with multitudes of stakeholders, seem ill-suited to financing industries subject to rapid managerial and technological changes and to high levels of uncertainty.⁸ Europe's financial institutions, centred on conservative

⁷ According to the OECD, largely because of the Continent's suffocating bureaucracy, it takes on average more than 3 months to form a limited liability company in the Eurozone, as against a mere week in the US and Britain.

⁸ Colin Mayer, 'The City and Corporate Performance: Condemned or Exonerated?', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1997.

banks, have, as in the past, preferred to go on lending to their long-established clients, active in traditional sectors. These are often large enterprises that provide secure collateral in the form of buildings and equipment, in contrast to the small firms of the Silicon Valley variety whose main collateral is provided by human capital.¹⁹ By contrast, a major force stimulating the development of such new technologies in North America has been the flexibility of financial markets and, in particular, the availability of venture capital.

Older and slower?

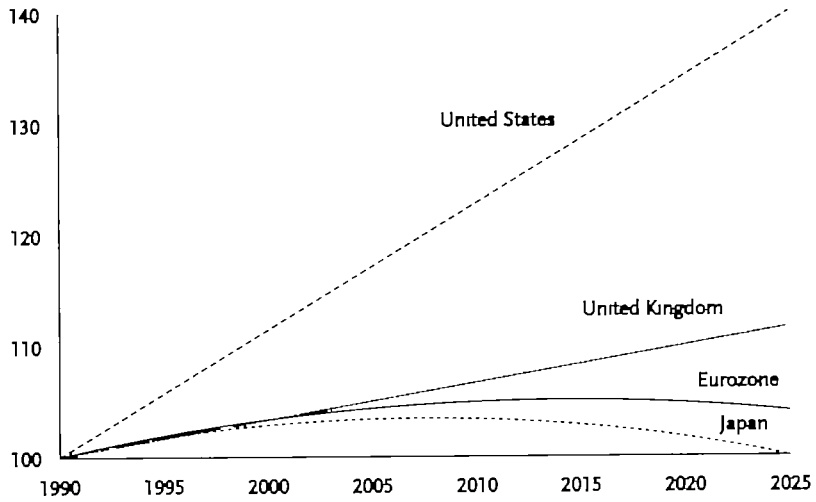
Thirdly, demographic trends have also played their role. Demography may be slow moving, but its impact on economics is profound. Trends in both total population levels and in the share of the population that is old are illustrated in Figure 3, opposite. The contrast between the demographic dynamism of the United States and the demographic stagnation, and coming regression, of the Eurozone and Japan are startling, with Britain somewhere in between, but a lot closer to the Continental than to the American model. A stagnant or falling population reduces growth directly because less labour is available than otherwise would have been the case. An ageing population does the same and is, in addition, also likely, other things equal, to have lower savings than a younger one. This, in turn, is bound to slow down capital formation and hence productivity growth.

Ageing is also likely to create potential tensions between generations, if pension arrangements for the old are felt to be too generous. Trying to reduce such arrangements, as is increasingly being done, has, moreover, counter-productive effects since it encourages fear and retrenchment among the elderly, thereby slowing down the growth of consumption and accelerating early retirement. Pension reforms are, indeed, necessary. But rather than just pushing for private provisions (something that on the Continent is, as yet, mercifully limited) and cutting the generosity of public benefits, much more effort should be directed at preventing early retirement and encouraging continuing labour-force participation among the aged.

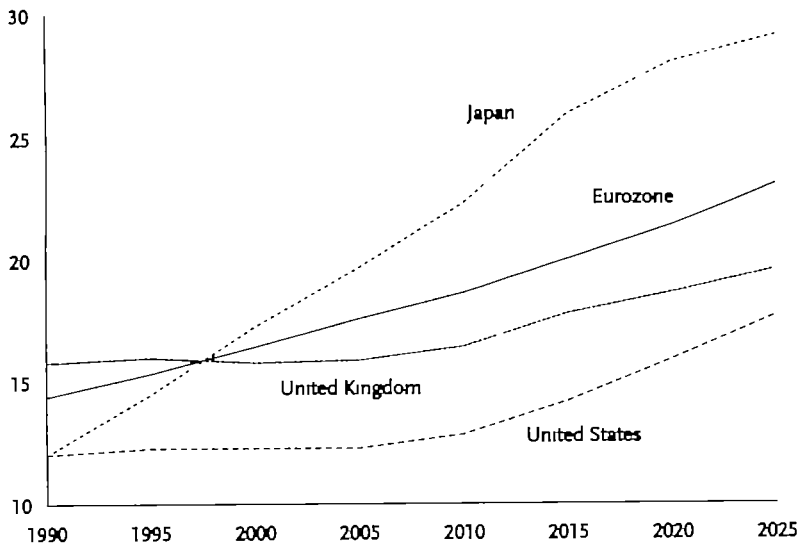
¹⁹ It is probably not by chance that the only high-tech area in which Europe has seen some growth (followed by a massive bust) has been telecom, a sector dominated by large national champions.

FIGURE 3: *Longer-run Demographic Trends*

A. Population Levels (1990 = 100)



B. The ageing population (share of people aged 65 or more)



Source: UNFPA

Finally, and in this author's view most importantly, ageing has a longer-run, indirect negative effect on the growth of both output and productivity of a non-economic nature. Old people are, on the whole, opposed to change and dislike new ventures. Old people are surely less innovative and less entrepreneurial than the young. Thus, America's advance in the new technologies may also have been helped by the relative youth of its population (both native and immigrant). Europe, in other words, may be slowly turning into a conservative continent, in which a growing share of the population shuns change and frowns on new initiatives. At one level, this is hardly tragic. Welfare levels are high and ageing is associated with a number of favourable aspects (less crime and less pollution, just to mention two obvious ones). At another, however, it does mean that the gap in living standards between the two sides of the Atlantic, however small at present, will almost certainly grow again. And as that gap expands, so too will the political one. America's superpower position looks set to rise well beyond its present, already overwhelming, status.

Results and prospects

Exactly a decade ago, surveying the economic record of the 1980s and early 1990s, the present author argued that 'two major problems have beset the Western European economy in the 1980s—a relatively slow growth rate and, more importantly, massive and rising unemployment in most countries of the area'. The reasons for this poor performance were attributed to 'unfavourable exogenous shocks . . . overly restrictive policies [and] a possible gradual loss of international competitiveness'.²⁰ Sadly, ten years later, neither the picture nor the diagnosis have changed much. Overly restrictive policies have stifled growth, particularly in the early years of this century. Negative shocks have been less in evidence, though German unification did bring with it a number of unfavourable consequences, and the new technology bubble seems to have been associated with greater costs and far fewer benefits than in the us. The lack of international competitiveness was not as important a factor on this occasion—though it looms ahead—and unemployment did not go on rising; but growth performance has deteriorated further in both absolute and relative terms, and this in an environment that has seen rapid technological progress and hence a potential for faster, not slower, productivity growth.

²⁰ 'Western Europe's Economic Stagnation', NLR 1/201, September–October 1993.

Expectations at the time were that 'the problem could well worsen in the 1990s as most European economies strive to meet the virtually unattainable fiscal policy targets enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty for monetary union'. Expectations today are no more favourable. The policy-makers have, for twenty years now, been repeating the mantra that price stability and fiscal responsibility, together with market-friendly microeconomic reforms, will put Europe back onto a path of rapid growth and restore full employment. Inflation has been decelerating for fifteen years and is now so low that in some countries there is fear of deflation; budget deficits have been brought under broad control and liberalization efforts have been pursued virtually everywhere. Yet the hoped for successes have hardly come. Persisting with macroeconomic orthodoxy seems hardly to have greatly encouraged business confidence. And market-friendly microeconomic reforms, while appropriate in some areas (for instance bureaucratic over-regulation), may well have had negative effects on consumer confidence in others (such as too rapid an erosion of welfare provisions).

This latter development is particularly worrying for two major reasons. First, welfare states represent an insurance mechanism against economic shocks. Such shocks can become more frequent as globalization proceeds and it is probably no coincidence that welfare provisions are more developed the more countries are open to international trade.²¹ Few economists doubt the potential gains that can come from continuing globalization—indeed, this is one of the few areas that could stimulate Eurozone growth in future. But to ensure such gains, globalization must also receive legitimacy through popular support. Reducing social security provisions just when the need for them may be increasing hardly seems wise.

Secondly such reductions are bound to generate even more cautionary behaviour among the elderly whose weight is rising rapidly in Continental Europe. As it is, this demographic transformation is bound to reduce growth even further. It is true that many of today's welfare provisions seem extravagant in the light of these demographic trends, and some indeed are.²² But blanket attempts to pare them, by reducing demand

²¹ Dani Rodrik, *Has Globalization Gone too Far?*, Washington, DC 1997.

²² This is particularly true for public sector pension provisions which, in several Continental countries, are far more generous than they are for private sector employees. In an ideal world, one would like to raise the latter; in a demographically constrained world, there is little choice but to reduce the former.

ENTERING GLOBAL ANARCHY

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION has the wind in its sails with the conquest of Iraq. It thinks it can do what it wants and will probably act on this belief for the foreseeable future. It is understandable that Pentagon hawks, who have long preached that militarism would pay off, now feel they have clear proof for their thesis. It is equally natural that opponents of American imperialism should feel demoralized by the apparent us success. I will argue that both assessments miss the mark and fail to grasp what is really happening in the geopolitical arena. In what follows I will construct my analysis around three periods: the postwar apogee of us hegemony, from 1945 to 1967–73; the late summer glow, stretching from 1967–73 until 2001; and the stage that stretches ahead of us, from 2001 until 2025 or 2050: one of anarchy which the us cannot control. I shall distinguish three axes within each period: the internal competitive struggles of the major loci of accumulation of the capitalist world-economy; the 'North–South' struggle; and the battle to determine the future world-system, between two groups that I shall metaphorically label the camps of Davos and of Porto Alegre.

During the period from 1945 until 1967–73, the United States was unquestionably the hegemonic power in the world-system, possessing a combination of economic, military, political and cultural advantage over any and all other states. At the end of the Second World War, it was the only industrial power to have escaped wartime destruction and had significantly increased its productive capacities beyond their considerable pre-war levels. American firms could produce goods so much more efficiently than their competitors that they could, at first, penetrate the others' home markets. Indeed, the situation was so uneven that the us had to engage in the economic reconstruction of Western Europe and Japan in order to have a reasonable world customer base.

This overwhelming economic advantage was combined with a military edge. After 1945 American public opinion did, admittedly, insist on an immediate downsizing of the armed forces, to 'get the boys home'. But the us possessed the atomic bomb and an air force capable of dropping it anywhere. The only other military force of any serious consequence was the Soviet Union which, by 1949, also had nuclear weapons. The us had no option but to make a deal. Though the Yalta accords were only a small part of much wider arrangements, the bargain struck between the great powers has been known by that name ever since. It contained three central clauses: retention of the status quo in Europe along the lines where the us and Soviet troops stood in 1945; the economic cloistering of the two world zones; and the freedom to use mutually denunciatory rhetoric.

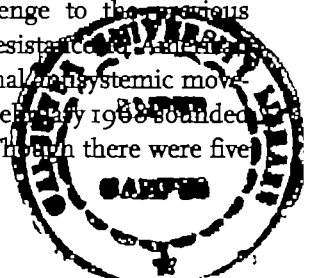
These three points were more or less respected up to 1980, and even, to a large extent, up to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The status quo was tested by the Berlin Blockade in 1949, but it was reaffirmed by the outcome of the crisis. Subsequently, the us rigorously abstained from assisting any uprisings in the Soviet zone, other than rhetorically. The USSR had no troops stationed in either Yugoslavia or Albania, the two breakaways from its bloc. However, rather than becoming part of the us sphere, these states were allowed to remain 'neutral' by both sides in the Cold War. Whether the Yalta agreement was meant to apply to Korea was initially unclear. The result of the Korean War—an armed truce at the line of departure—placed the peninsula squarely inside its framework. Economic cloistering also persisted through the first decades of the post-war period, though it began to unravel after 1973. It was only the strident rhetoric of the so-called Cold War that gave the impression that a serious struggle was under way. Of course, many do still believe this was the case; but viewed from a distance, it could equally well be seen as a choreographed conflict in which nothing ever really happened.

Politically, the Yalta arrangements allowed both sides to line up a series of faithful allies. It has been customary to refer to those of the Soviet Union as satellite countries; but us clients—in Europe, the NATO countries; in East Asia, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan—were hardly less subservient. New York became the world centre of high art and mass culture became increasingly 'Americanized'. Finally, in terms of ideological domination, the concept of the 'free world' did at least as well as the notion of the 'socialist camp'.

Within the North, then, the us was able to impose its wishes both on its capitalist competitors and on its superpower rival with a 95 per cent success rate, 95 per cent of the time. This was surely hegemony. The only sand in the machinery was a certain resistance in the South to this American-defined world order. In theory, the us preached 'development' and the liberation of the South from colonial rule; the Soviet Union sang the same tune, in even shriller tones. But in practice, neither was in any rush to further these objectives, and it was left to the peoples of the South to advance their own cause with varying degrees of political energy and militancy. There occurred some famous struggles and violent revolution—notably in China, Vietnam, Cuba and Algeria—quite outside the Yalta framework. The us did what it could to suppress such movements and had some significant successes—engineering the overthrow of Mossadegh in Iran, removing Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954, among a great many others. But the North also experienced a few very important failures—the Soviet Union in China; France in Algeria; the us in Cuba; and first France, then the us, in Vietnam. Both the West and the ussr were obliged to adjust to these 'realities'—that is, to absorb the events into the ambit of their rhetoric and try to co-opt the new regimes, thereby limiting their impact on the geopolitical arena and the world-economy. The outcome of what might be called the world class struggle during this period seems to have been a draw. On the one hand, there was a sweep of antisystemic sentiment throughout the world, especially in the South, that had a self-fulfilling effect; triumphalism was the order of the day. On the other hand, this upsurge began to burn itself out as the North made just sufficient concessions to its demands.

Late summer glow

The period of 1967–73 represents the moment at which the *trente glorieuses* came to an end, and the world-economy entered a long Kondratieff B-phase. Probably the biggest immediate cause of the downturn was the economic rise of Western Europe and Japan, which inevitably led to overproduction in the world's former leading industries. Politically and culturally, the revolutionary upsurge of 1968—actually 1966–70—represented a thorough-going challenge to the previous period. It was triggered by a combination of resistance to American hegemony and disillusionment with the traditional antisystemic movements. In the military arena, the Tet offensive of February 1968 sounded the death knell for us intervention in Vietnam. Though there were five



more agonizing years of warfare before the final withdrawal in 1973, the fact remained that the us had actually lost a war against a small Third World nation. The combination of these three occurrences—the downturn in the world-economy, the upsurge of 1968 and us defeat in Vietnam—transformed the geopolitical scene, and marked the onset of the slow decline of American hegemony. The us would no longer be able to realize its objectives with that 95 per cent success rate, noted above—even in the North. But one does not lose hegemonic control overnight; there was a late summer glow.

The economics of this period are not that difficult to understand. A Kondratieff B-phase has certain standard characteristics:

- ▶ a decline in the profitability of productive enterprises—especially those that had previously been most profitable—and a consequent shift in focus by capitalists from the arena of production to that of speculative financial activity;
- ▶ a flight of industries whose profits are declining—because their monopolistic advantages have disappeared—from the core zones to semiperipheral ‘developing’ countries, where wages are lower even if transaction costs are higher;
- ▶ a significant rise in world unemployment levels, and therefore an effort by the major loci of accumulation to ‘export’ unemployment to each other, in large part to minimize political fallout.

All of these duly occurred. The spectacular events—though not the causes—of the downturn were the oil price rises of 1973 and 1979 and a series of devastating debt crises: that of the Third World and socialist bloc in the 1980s; of the us government and transnational corporations in the early 1990s; of us consumers in the late 1990s, along with the effects of the East Asian and other devaluations; and another round of excessive us government debt begun under the second Bush administration. As for the comparative well-being of the major loci of accumulation: Europe did best in the 1970s, Japan in the 1980s and the us in the (late) 1990s; all have been doing badly since 2000. In the rest of the world, the promise of ‘development’, so actively and optimistically pursued in the earlier period, was revealed as the mirage it had always been, at least for the great majority of states.

Politically, the us-centred order began to disintegrate. Western Europe and Japan were no longer prepared to be satellites, demanding instead to be partners. The us tried to appease them with new structures—the Trilateral Commission and the G-7 meetings—and deployed two main arguments to hold its allies in line: the Soviet Union remained a threat to their interests; and a united position against a rising South was essential to maintain their collective advantages. These lines of reasoning were only partially successful. The Soviet zone, meanwhile, was also beginning to fragment after the spectacular rise of Solidarność in Poland and Gorbachev's reforms. Its dissolution was accelerated by the collapse of developmentalism, parallel to its failures in the Third World—revealing that the states of the Eastern bloc had always remained peripheral or semiperipheral components of the capitalist world-economy. In the South, the weakened position of both the us and the USSR did seem to leave some space for the partial resolution of a number of long-standing conflicts in Central America, southern Africa and Southeast Asia, but all the outcomes represented political compromises.

The revolutionary upsurge of 1968 and the collapse of developmentalism in the Kondratieff B-phase severely undermined the moral legitimacy of the Old Left, the classical antisystemic movements, which now seemed to most of their erstwhile supporters to offer little beyond a defensive electoralism. Their successors—in particular, the multiple Maoisms and the so-called New Left, the Greens, feminists and the many different identity-based movements—had short, brilliant impacts in various countries, but failed to acquire the dramatic centrality, either nationally or internationally, that the Old Left movements had achieved during the earlier postwar period.

In terms of the world class struggle, the weakening of the antisystemic movements—old and new—allowed establishment forces to launch a counteroffensive of considerable magnitude. This initially took the form of the neoliberal regimes in Britain and the us; the rise of the 'Washington Consensus', which buried the ideal of developmentalism and replaced it with 'globalization'; and the vigorous expansion of the role and activities of the IMF, World Bank and newly formed World Trade Organization, all of which sought to curtail the ability of peripheral states to interfere with the free flow of goods and, above all, of capital. This worldwide offensive had three main objectives: to push back the level of wages; to restore the externalization of production costs by ending

serious constraints on ecological abuses; and to reduce tax levels by dismantling welfare state provisions. At first, this programme seemed to have been magnificently successful, and Thatcher's slogan, 'There Is No Alternative', appeared to carry the day. By the late 1990s, however, this offensive had reached its political limits.

The currency devaluations of the late 1990s in East and Southeast Asia and Brazil brought to power a series of leaders—Roh in South Korea, Putin in Russia, Megawati in Indonesia, Lula in Brazil—whose electoral platforms or performance in office have not always followed Washington's prescriptions. The collapse of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union led to a long series of national conflicts, resulting in widespread 'ethnic cleansing', large zones of instability and little political credit for either the US or Western Europe. Debt and civil wars crippled a number of states in Africa. The cultural and ideological dominance of the Davos 'camp' met an unexpected challenge in Seattle in 1999, when rather traditional, centrist American trade unionists combined with New Left groups to force the WTO into a standstill from which it has not yet fully managed to extricate itself. The momentum thereafter fell to a loosely organized world coalition of movements, which have held a series of successful meetings in Porto Alegre and established themselves as a counter-pole to that of Davos. When George W. Bush thrust his way to the US presidency, the outlook was not at all good for the sole remaining superpower. One of the themes of his campaign had been an attack on Clinton's foreign policy, though this had operated on the same basic premises as every president since Nixon: attempts to patch the leaking balloon of US hegemony by repeated negotiations with its presumed allies, as well as with Russia and China, combined with sporadic and limited use of force in the Third World. American foreign policy since the 1970s has always had two primary objectives: preventing the emergence of a politically independent European entity and maintaining the US military edge by restricting the spread of nuclear weapons in the South. As of 2000, the balance-sheet for these two strategic goals was at best mixed and the future very uncertain.

Strategizing endless war

It was at this point that Bush entered office. His administration was divided between those who wished to continue the foreign policy of the 1973–2001 period and those who argued vociferously that this had

failed, and was the cause—not merely the result—of the relative decline of us hegemony. Those adopting the latter stance have three principal bases: the neo-cons, such as Wolfowitz and Perle; the Christian right; and the ‘classical’ militarists, Cheney, Rumsfeld and others, whose views were seconded by McCain even though he was personally not on terms with Bush. The motives, priorities and political strengths of these three groups are quite different, but they have formed a tight political bloc based on certain shared assumptions.

- ▶ us decline is a reality, caused by the unwise timidity of successive us governments; but it could be rapidly reversed by frank, open and speedy pre-emptive military actions in one zone after another;
- ▶ whatever the initial reluctance, even opposition, of the us establishment, domestic opinion and allies in Western Europe and East Asia, successful demonstrations of America’s armed might would make them fall into line;
- ▶ the way to handle recalcitrant regimes in the South is by intimidation and, if that fails, by conquest.

There was another reading of history on which the hawks agreed: they had never been able to get any us administration to adopt their reasoning and follow their prescriptions to the extent that they desired. They were a frustrated group, and when Bush came into office, they were not at all sure they had the President on their side. Rather, they feared that he would be a replica of his father or—though they were careful never to say so—of Reagan, who had committed the unforgivable sin of trying to strike a deal with Gorbachev. September 11 was an incredible bonanza for this contingent. It catapulted Bush into their camp, if only because being a war president waging an endless campaign against ‘terrorism’ seemed to guarantee his political future. It legitimated the use of military force against an ultra-weak opponent, the Taliban, in an operation that commanded about as much worldwide legitimacy as any such action could ever acquire. After this, the hawks felt they could go for broke—Iraq. They knew that this would be more difficult politically, but they also knew that it was now or never—not only for the conquest of Baghdad, but for their entire geopolitical programme.

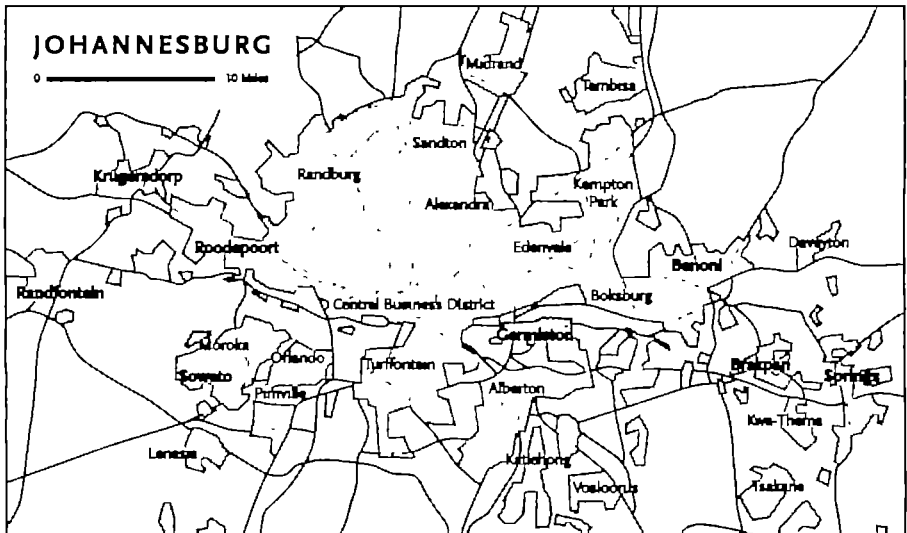
They ran into far more difficulty than they had anticipated. First, veterans of the Bush Senior administration—probably with the connivance of their former employer—persuaded the president to adopt

a 'multilateralist' approach. At this stage, the prophecies of the hawks seemed to materialize. France announced it would veto a second UNSC resolution authorizing the use of force, and was able to get Germany and Russia to join it—leading in March 2003 to humiliation for the us which, despite exerting all the pressure it could muster, was unable to secure a simple majority in the Security Council, and had to withdraw its resolution. Meanwhile, on 15 February 2003, the forces of what I have called the Porto Alegre camp mobilized a global antiwar protest, unmatched in previous world history. Finally, even faithful Turkey failed the us, despite the enormous bribe it was offered. The invasion of Iraq, of course, went ahead and the Saddam Hussein regime collapsed. Rumsfeld and Powell are now issuing further threats to the Middle East, Northeast Asia and even Latin America. They are convinced their gambit has succeeded and that us hegemony has been restored. They talk openly, and without shame, of America's imperial role. But have they intimidated everyone else?

I do not think so. Here we move into the uncertain immediate future, and in moments of systemic anarchy such as the present, almost anything can happen. Nevertheless, there seem to be certain tendencies:

- ▶ the present us government is committed to a unilateralist and rather aggressive foreign policy;
- ▶ European integration will proceed—no doubt with difficulty, but unceasingly—and Europe will distance itself further from the us;
- ▶ China, Korea and Japan will begin to move closer together—a project laden with many more complications than that of European integration, but of greater geopolitical consequence;
- ▶ nuclear proliferation in the South will continue and probably expand;
- ▶ assuming the imperial mantle will further erode us claims to moral legitimacy in the world-system;
- ▶ the camp of Porto Alegre will grow more solid and probably more militant;
- ▶ the camp of Davos may well be increasingly split between those who will seek to join, come to terms with or co-opt the Porto Alegre camp, and those determined to destroy it;
- ▶ the us may soon start regretting the whirlwind it has unleashed by its action in Iraq.

We have entered an anarchic transition—from the existing world-system to a different one. As in any such period, no one controls the situation to any significant degree, least of all a declining hegemonic power like the us. Though the proponents of a us imperium may think they have the wind in their sails there are strong gales blowing from all directions and the real problem—for all our boats—will be to avoid capsizing. Whether the ultimate outcome will be a less or more egalitarian and democratic order is totally uncertain. But the world that emerges will be a consequence of how we act, collectively and concretely, in the decades to come.



TREVOR NGWANE

SPARKS IN THE TOWNSHIP

Where were you born and brought up, and what was your family background?

I was born in 1960 in Durban. My father and mother were medical nurses. My grandfathers were both Presbyterian preachers, from Zululand. My father was an ANC supporter. He spent some time in Dar es Salaam when I was small. I'm not sure that he went because of politics: people got out for lots of reasons, for opportunities or dignity. He came back for the sake of the family. But anyone who had been abroad was targeted by the Special Branch once they returned to South Africa. Although he was not really active, they used to visit him every week or so when I was a child; he died more or less a broken man. He definitely had an influence on me. I remember him showing me some political books: there was one in a brown-paper cover, so I never knew the author or title. When I was six we moved to Zululand. My parents worked in a hospital there run by a Scottish missionary, who tried to work along progressive lines. There was a black Jesus in the chapel, for example—that was something in those days; we used to point him out to each other. At that time, Buthelezi was considered quite a hero—he refused to accept 'independent homeland' status for Zululand, toured the country speaking out for black people and met with the ANC. Even my father was fooled when he set up Inkatha with the colours black, green, gold: 'It's the colours of the ANC!' he told me; only the older people knew that then.

After my parents separated my brother and I were sent to a Catholic boarding school, run by the Dominicans, near Durban. My mother thought it was the best school around but it had a really strict regime,

with punishments for everything. The food was terrible, too. I was there for four years—I was expelled after the school strike in 1976. Not that I was particularly political: more of a rebel in a generic sense, getting caught out of bounds, or drinking. But there was a spontaneous strike at our school after the police massacres in Soweto on June 16, 1976. The situation was very tense. Some students came in to talk to us; they had more experience and were at the forefront of the boycott. I didn't play much of a part but these things quickly affect everyone. We felt under very strong pressure. We were all expelled, sent home. A month later the school authorities handpicked the ones they wanted to return. But they told my brother and me not to come back—they had some problem with me. After that I transferred to a township school in Newcastle, on the other side of Natal, where my father was living. I matriculated there.

In 1979 I started at Fort Hare, in the Eastern Cape. It's the oldest black university in South Africa; Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo went there. I studied sociology, although at first I was enrolled for a BA in Personnel Management. When I arrived, there was the normal hullabaloo about which course to take. We were shoved around and didn't get proper guidance, and this was a special new syllabus that they wanted to recruit students to. We studied sociology, industrial psychology, statistics, other social-science subjects. It made a big impact on me—at first, not politically: I was just fascinated by the ideas, and a whole new world opened up. It must have been around this time that I stopped believing in God.

Sociology was a bit better than some of the courses: there were a few black lecturers who tried to put the other side; Eastern Cape was a political place and Fort Hare has that prestige. We read dependency theory as well as the classics: Durkheim, Weber. There was a special course, 'development policy and administration', where we learned about the Group Areas Act and apartheid policy. It was meant to train young blacks in apartheid administration but it was taught by a good teacher, Mike Sham, who tried to give us a different perspective. He used to lend me books. But there was also the baptism by fire of the grading system. Many of the courses that were strategic for black students—statistics, anthropology, accounting—had something like a 10 per cent pass rate. Some people got a low mark on their first test and never recovered. But each one counted, and if you didn't get around 50 per cent overall, you failed the course. Come September, all those who didn't make the year mark had to face the ritual of returning home. Typically, some of them

were your friends. It was the expulsions, I think, that made for the solidarity among us, when there were outbreaks of defiance.

What was the political atmosphere like?

The country wasn't yet on fire, but there were things going on. When Mozambique got its independence in 1980 there were student demonstrations and class boycotts in support of FRELIMO. A group of students put up a manifesto, signed with a popular name—something with a bit of mystique, like 'The Wolf Man'—and we all read it. This happened three or four times. Then there was a meeting in the Great Hall. Everyone came to listen to the debate; it was quite democratic. I wasn't really political yet, but the atmosphere was so highly charged: not only in the country, in terms of people striving for freedom, liberation; but with FRELIMO showing the way, the possibility. There was hope. But also we felt, at least myself and my friends, that we were so oppressed in that university. Everyone shared a sense of relief and wanted to support the boycott; there was no question of breaking it—perhaps one or two people might have tried, but it was too strong. So we were all expelled for 'political disturbances', as they were called. The same thing was happening at every black university. After a month you could reapply and the authorities would select who they wanted.

By this stage I was starting to develop a more conscious critique of apartheid; there were a couple of guys who used to challenge us to think more constructively. But we weren't discussing politics all the time. For us, it was a question of surviving the courses, passing, failing—and then, if there was a student strike, a boycott, we all went for it; there was a lot of solidarity. In 1982 there were more protests and they expelled us again. But this time we decided, nearly all of us, that we would not go back because we were so poorly treated. We knew they would exclude all our leaders, the so-called agitators. So we stayed out, apart from a few. They are still known as 'the defenders'. Someone should write a book about them: the black guys who now defend the corporate world betrayed us even earlier.

What did you do after the expulsion from university?

I moved to Soweto. I phoned a research agency that I had worked for during the June holidays and got a job there. Meanwhile, I carried

on with my degree by correspondence course through the University of South Africa. The agency turned out to be the research wing of a government parastatal for apartheid engineering, developing personnel management strategies—aptitude tests for mineworkers, supervisors and so on. The pass laws were still in force—they'd ask for your pass and arrest you if you didn't have it—and the 8 o'clock curfew. When I arrived here I didn't have anywhere to stay. I squatted around in different parts of Soweto, including the Salvation Army, until I found a place. First I was living in a backroom, then I graduated to a backyard garage. That was bigger, but there were insulation problems, what with the roll-down door and everything.

This was the time of the 1984–86 township rebellions. What was your involvement with the movement, and what were its effects on your own political development?

Soweto was burning—it affected everyone. At that stage I was doing a full-time masters degree at Wits University, in downtown Johannesburg. I worked there as a tutor, then junior lecturer, till 88 and it was in those years that I became a Marxist. There was a small group of us who are still close comrades, who would read and talk things through; they've seen me through a lot. Though I was only in my twenties I had my own course, 'Class and Nationalism', lecturing on the youth of the ANC, the Pan-African Congress, Afrikaner nationalism and the South African Communist Party. Our orientation was towards the ANC: we supported the workers who wanted to fashion it as a weapon of struggle, and always argued against the two-stage theory. 'We urban the ANC!' was one of our slogans. But at that point the link for me was more of an intellectual one than actual involvement on the ground. For example, some youths came to demand my car—that's the kind of thing that would happen—but my room was so full of posters about the struggle that I convinced them I knew their leadership, which saved the car. And I did have Winnie Mandela in one of my classes. Each week, one of the students would present and teach a class and on Winnie's day, she came dressed in full ANC regalia with a prepared speech about the movement. We even managed to use banned material in my course reader—Marx, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Slovo, the whole lot. During the wave of mass arrests when the State of Emergency was declared in 1986 one of my students, Pascal Moloi, got detained. So we took his course work and all this material into jail. It was a popular thing.

Those were heady days for me. We had radical ideas about reading policy and the role of education. I decided I didn't want to make the students go through the exam system; I would hand them the question papers two or three days before, against regulations. We watched a video once a week, read books, used the amazing library. Then an ex-mine worker who'd come to the department for the 'Sociology of Work' programme, a Lesotho politico, started showing the videos to the university workers, who'd been cleaning the blackboards for twenty years but could barely read or write. Being political, he would give a short talk, before or after, then the workers started interrupting to say their bit. Soon we commandeered the tea room to start teaching them to read and write; my students all joined in. This was what mushroomed into the Wits Workers Literacy Project—it grew and grew, and started attracting railway workers, shop workers. I'd got squeezed out of my department, though there was a big campaign for my reinstatement, so I started teaching at the Literacy Project instead.

What was your assessment of the negotiations that followed Mandela's release from jail in 1990, and the unbanning of the ANC and SACP? To what extent were the rank and file privy to what was going on—or did they simply want to trust the ANC regardless?

I remember turning on the radio and hearing: 'The ANC announced today that the armed struggle has been suspended'. We couldn't believe it—it was like chopping off an arm and a leg. Of course, they never did anything much but we used to romanticize it; that little bomb at the Wimpy Bar won them so much support in the country. People wanted to trust them, naturally, but there was opposition to the direction the negotiations were taking. Mandela used his gigantic stature to contain it. In January 1990 he'd announced—in the note smuggled out from Pollsmoor Prison—that nationalization continued to be the policy of the ANC; 'growth through redistribution' was the line. By September 93 he was touring Western capitals with the National Party Finance Minister, Derek Keys, speaking at the UN, pleading for foreign investment and guaranteeing the repatriation of profits and capital-protection measures.

Without detracting from those twenty-seven years in jail—what that cost him, what he stood for—Mandela has been the real sellout, the biggest betrayer of his people. When it came to the crunch, he used his status to camouflage the actual agreement that the ANC was forging with the

South African elite under the sugar-coating of the Reconstruction and Development Programme. Basically the ANC was granted formal, administrative power, while the wealth of the country was retained in the hands of the white capitalist elite, Oppenheimer and company. Mandela's role was decisive in stabilizing the new dispensation; by all accounts, a daring gamble on the part of the bourgeoisie.

I was working with the Transport Workers Union at that time, between 91 and 93, as a political education officer; I'd joined the ANC in 1990. The feeling in the trade-union movement was triumphant: we were really hitting the bosses, now they felt forced to invite us to sit down, to give us all sorts of things. The reality was just the opposite: because the bosses were on the back foot they had gone on the attack. They deployed the ideology of tripartism—the golden triangle of labour–government–capital—to trap the unions in 'codetermination' discussions on how to maximize company profits and productivity. The way they did it was supremely flattering to the middling union officials. Don't forget South Africa had one of the most unionized working classes in the world—something like 23 per cent of the economically active population in 1994. Between them, the two independent trade-union federations, FOSATU and COSATU, had 3.2 million members and 25,000 elected shop stewards. Their role was going to be vital in stabilizing the new order, supporting what they called the 'export-oriented economy'. Of course, the collapse of the Soviet Union had made a big difference—a disarming and disorienting world event which the bourgeoisie took full advantage of to argue that there was no alternative.

At the same time, there were big struggles going on inside the trade-union movement, between the more 'workerist', plant-based FOSATU faction and the 'populist', UDF-aligned COSATU, with closer ties in the communities. Sometimes it got physical. There were also real fights between the black consciousness forces and the ANC; blood was flowing. The returning ANC leadership had to graft itself onto the mass democratic movement. They started by closing down the other structures, in the name of unity: 'Why do you need your own Youth Congress? We have the Youth League'; 'Why do you need the Transvaal Federation of Women? We have the Women's League'. There was also a lot of destabilization going on: the dirty war organized by the security forces, provoking bloodshed. That strengthened the hand of those calling for 'unity'.

There was opposition in the trade unions to the line the leadership was taking. But, to quite a large extent, this was either bought off or repressed by the ANC-SACP COSATU officials. For instance, I wrote a paper in 1993 called 'Is Holding Hands with the Bosses the way for New South Africa?' that was critical of COSATU's codetermination policies. I was expelled, then reinstated after a big campaign, then expelled again in 1995. That's carried on. John Appolis, the Chemical Workers' leader, has just been fired by the union for his role in the anti-privatization struggle. Whereas Alec Erwin, once a big trade-union figure and defender of workers' democracy, is now Minister of Trade and Industry, pushing neoliberal policies. Moses Mayekiso from the Metalworkers' Union, who was once *the* socialist leader, has been promoting every World Bank initiative through the National Civic Organization, SANCO. Now he's caught up in an investment-company scam.

The first one-person, one-vote municipal elections in South Africa came a year and a half after the ANC's watershed victory in 1994. You were elected as a councillor for the Pimville ward in Soweto, on the ANC ticket. What space was there then for progressive politics at the municipal level? How much of a change, with the ending of apartheid?

It was a real change after apartheid. Before that, local government had been run strictly along black and white lines, so Soweto had its black local authority, Sandton a white one. In 1995 that was reorganized so that the black areas were no longer isolated: Soweto was divided in two, with Pimville and Orlando East joined to Randburg, in the north, and the rest linked to the Central Business District, so that redistributive policies became a real possibility. The same went for the other townships; Alexandra was linked to Sandton. The Johannesburg Metro, a city-wide municipality, was superimposed overall. The Reconstruction and Development Programme had a component of 'people-driven development': local labour had to be used for building projects and each community had to come up with its own development objectives. My first job in the Pimville ward was to call public meetings, with representatives from the civic, the community organizations, the ANC, to draw up a participatory budget where the local people could list their own priorities.

We ran into problems within a matter of months. The contractors tried to turn the local-employment policy against the working class by using

casual labour, undocumented migrants. We dealt with that by enforcing a minimum wage of 50 rand per day, around \$7, on every contract tendered: 'You can employ casual labour but you have to pay the minimum wage'. The employers complained to the Metro council, claiming this was an 'obstacle to development'. I was 'investigated' over the 50-rand wage; there was a bit of a witch-hunt. They would bribe local leaders to soften the rules, so they could pay less. It soon became clear that the bureaucracy was frowning on community control. Officials would talk about 'the contradiction between development and democracy' and the councillors weren't strong enough to question that. A lot of them were naïve and well-meaning but didn't really know what they wanted to do. The bureaucrats had an interest in undermining them—they would prepare the agendas, decide how many meetings there should be. Of course, this couldn't have happened without the ANC's tacit consent. The mood changed within the ruling ANC caucus: robust debates became muted; decisions were taken away from councillors and we were discouraged from participating in local community forums. There were issues we couldn't discuss.

The crunch came when they announced a big financial crisis for Johannesburg; they had 'just realized' the city was in the red. This was in 1997, a year after the national currency crisis, when the ANC effectively ditched the RDP for GEAR, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme—a thorough-going privatization–deregulation strategy, involving savage public-sector cutbacks, loosened exchange controls and a regressive sales-tax policy. All the Johannesburg ANC councillors were called to an emergency caucus meeting—you could see it was a coordinated effort—for a long PowerPoint presentation, followed by three minutes of questions. All the 'people's budgets' had to be frozen. I argued, 'But comrades, when there's less money, all the more reason to be democratic'. But they didn't want to hear that. The next budget was put together by experts, special whizz kids. Again, the plan was unveiled with PowerPoint—we joked about how 'the words fall from the sky like rain'; one hour's presentation and a couple of questions. After that they started to target people more systematically, or coopt them for well-paid committee jobs.

In 1999, just after the second general election confirmed Mbeki in power, the council introduced their comprehensive privatization plan for the city, Igoli 2002. There would be massive cutbacks, around twenty thousand

job losses, and everything would be put out to tender—water, electricity, garbage collection, sewage. *Igoli* is the Zulu word for Johannesburg. I called it *E. coli 2002*, because the water privatization soon had sewage leaking into the water table. At this time, Mbeki was using the phrase, ‘The people have spoken’, to imply that if people had voted for the ANC they must support its neoliberal policies and shouldn’t now oppose them. I wrote a piece for the newspaper called ‘The People Have Not Spoken’, a debate between the city manager, the trade union—*SAMWU*, the municipal workers’ union, had come out against the plan—and myself, putting the views of my constituents. The piece was by invitation, though I didn’t write it without discussing it with my comrades. I decided it had to be done.

Within three days, the ANC suspended me from all my positions, including those in the Council. I faced a disciplinary hearing for bringing the Party into disrepute. They then tried to make a deal, saying, ‘ok, if you publicly recant your statements, we’ll reduce the two years’ suspension to nine months’. The timing was calculated to coincide with the local government elections in 2000. They were offering me the chance to run again. I went to my constituents, and they said ‘No, you can’t apologise’. It was then that I became an independent.

What sort of problems were Sowetians facing at this stage? What did the city’s restructuring programme entail?

The privatizations envisaged in *Igoli 2002* were premised on ‘cost-recovery’: that is, once the basic infrastructure had been set up—with corners often cut in the process—the citizens were supposed to cover whatever costs the utility companies demanded for maintenance and supply. The problems, and the pace of privatization, varied according to the utility. Take electricity. *ESKOM*—the Afrikaans acronym for the Electricity Supply Commission—had been established as the engine for the apartheid state’s mining–mineral complex. It absorbed over half the World Bank’s \$200 million credits to South Africa during the fifties and sixties, supplying cut-price power to white-owned industries while the majority of blacks went without domestic electricity. To this day, most poor blacks rely for their lighting, cooking and heating on paraffin, coal and wood—you can smell the coal smoke over the settlements when the evening meals are being cooked. Electricity only really reached the townships in the eighties. The main dwellings were supplied with cables

and metres, and the backyard shacks and garages would have to run a wire from there.

Under the apartheid regime there was a fixed payment for services. But under the ANC, as Eskom was readied for privatization, they began to charge per kilowatt hour. In 1999, Soweto electricity prices rose by 47 per cent. In Soweto, average bills in the summer are around 150 rand per month, or \$20; in the winter they soar to 500 rand, nearly \$70, when the average monthly income for over half Soweto's households is only 1,500 rand, just over \$200. From the spring of 2001 Eskom started to implement a drastic cut-off strategy for households overdue on payments—the company's 'debtor book' was apparently scaring off private buyers and there was disapproving talk of the townships having a 'culture of non-payment', a legacy of the rent and service boycotts of the eighties. In some cases, the Johannesburg Council further tightened the screw by cutting off people's water too.

Was this when the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee was formed?

It had begun earlier, in June 2000, when we ran a series of workshops on the energy crisis; then we started having mass meetings in the township. We got some research done by Wits University, a project organized by Patrick Bond, Maj Fil-Flynn and other comrades. Their survey, 'Electricity Crisis in Soweto'—it's on the web at www.queensu.ca/misp—showed what we already suspected: that most of the residents were working-class pensioners or unemployed, with lots of grannies as heads of households; that most of them did try to pay their bills, though there was such poor service at the local Eskom offices that they often had to queue all day on payment days. But the prices were out of their range: 89 per cent of them were in arrears, 61 per cent had had their power cut off by Eskom in the past year alone—they couldn't cook or run refrigerators, it was back to coal and paraffin to heat and light their homes. The draft report came out in April 2001, just when Eskom was stepping up the cut-offs to around 120,000 households a month nationwide. The ANC had been boasting that they'd brought electricity to millions of black households, but by 2001 more people were losing access every month than were gaining it. We called a Soweto-wide mass meeting and people came in their hundreds.

How is the SECC organized on the ground and what has been the focus of its activities?

We have around 22 branches in Soweto, each one with their own organizing committee—we reckon around 7,000 members in all. We've had a debate about membership cards. At the moment the position is, you can join and get a card for 10 rand a year, or you can just be a member. I don't have a card—my position is, everyone is a member who wants to be. We have an AGM every year on March 1st, and directly elected officials: chair, secretary, treasurer. Every Tuesday there's a committee meeting of representatives from the branches, around sixty people, where we get reports on problems, organize speakers for meetings and so on. We've had funding from War on Want, and this year we've got a US Public Welfare Foundation grant which we're going to use to employ an organizer and open an office, even if it's just for one year.

One of the first things we did was to launch Operation Khanyisa—*khanyisa* means light—where we reconnect people's electricity supply when it's been cut off. We trained local people how to do this. Within six months, over 3,000 households had been put back on the grid. We found that a lot of people were already illegally connected, through bribing Eskom employees. When we raised the question in mass meetings it would come as a relief to everyone to find that their neighbours were illegally connected too—they'd all been hiding it from each other. We turned what was a criminal deed from the point of view of Eskom into an act of defiance. It was good tactics and good politics. We organized a lot of protest marches, including going to city councillors' houses to cut off their electricity, to give them a taste of their own medicine, and to the mayor's office in Soweto. When they targeted our leaders for arrest after a councillor's supply was cut, five hundred Sowetans marched to Moroka Police Station to present themselves for mass arrest; the police were overwhelmed.

By October 2001 Eskom had retreated: they announced a moratorium on cut-offs. That gave us a victory under our belts. In December 2001 Jeff Radebe, the ANC Public Enterprise Minister and a leading SACP member, came to Orlando Hall in Soweto to offer a partial amnesty on arrears. We said that wasn't enough. Our demands are electricity for everyone, including the urban settlements and poor rural villages that don't have any supply yet; scrapping all arrears; the free basic supply the ANC

promised in the 2000 municipal elections and a flat-rate monthly price that people can budget for—a demand that we won in the 1980s from the apartheid regime. It's sad that Sowetans are now back to fighting for this from their own democratic government. We also oppose the privatization scheme that Radebe is still trying to push through. Recently, **ESKOM** has been installing pre-pay meters, a pilot scheme. That's our current campaign: marching to remove the pre-pay meters—or bypassing them, if people prefer—and dumping them at the mayor's office, at **ESKOM**, at the council. This is giving us new strength.

What led to the march on Mayor Amos Masondo's house?

Masondo had stood in the 2000 municipal elections on Mbeki's pledge of free basic water and electricity and though only a few people went to the polls, that was what they were voting for. By the end of the year they had got nothing. I was on national tv saying that the promises had just been an election ploy. People were beginning to call them liars. So the ANC announced that they would start a programme on July 1, 2001. On June 30, we all took a *kombi*—a minibus—to the mayor's house in Kensington and cut off his supply, to remind him that he had to give us the free water and electricity the next day. We know him personally because, though he lives in the suburb now, he comes from Moletsane. In fact, he left his mother there. Our movement has many pensioners, so this is a humiliation for him. At the time, Masondo downplayed the meeting to the press, but the next year, 2002, when we went to his house again after the mayor's office refused to respond to our demands, he was still complaining about it: 'You guys, you're undisciplined! It's very bad when you come to my house'.

The comrades weren't prepared to swallow this. We reported back to the meeting in Soweto and a resolution was passed that we would all go to his house the weekend after Easter. We took a bus this time and, as fate would have it, we got there in a mean mood, even the grannies and the old people. Masondo's bodyguard opened fire and we had to run for our lives. After that, all hell broke loose. Oddly, there was a truck of municipal workers there, collecting garbage, and they let us help ourselves. The comrades poured rubbish in his swimming pool, cut his water, cut his lights. In the end, eighty-seven of us got arrested. They used the law that allows them to keep us for seven days without bail, but we managed to mobilize even more people, each time we appeared in court. We became

known as the Kensington 87. It was only in March 2003 that we were finally cleared.

Could you tell us about the Anti-Privatization Forum? Was this set up at the same time as the SECC?

The Anti-Privatization Forum is a broader coalition of several dozen groups, with SECC one of the most active. But both grew out of the campaigns against Igoli 2002. The APF really came together in July 2000, when a lot of different organizations—the Anti-Igoli 2002 Committee, the Municipal Workers' Union, the Education Workers, NGOs, students, even the SACP to begin with—came together to protest against a big international conference on privatization, 'Urban Futures', that was being held at Wits University. We set up the APF with very simple terms of reference: 'We are not here to debate privatization, or find some 'third way' to finesse it. Everyone here has decided that privatization is bad, and wants to do something to fight it'. Because at that time there were a lot of think-tanks, debates, NGOs and so on that saw their job as derailing anti-privatization struggles. The ANC instructed the union leaderships to keep away, although the municipal workers stayed with us for longer.

The main campaigns fought by the APF have been around water, electricity, evictions. We have a central office at Cosatu House, in downtown Johannesburg, that gets some funding from War on Want, and clusters of affiliated groups in the communities. In Vaal, to the south, for instance, there is the Bophelong Community Forum, the Working-Class Community Coordinating Committee and three others. In the east, we have the Kathorus Concerned Residents, the United Physics of South Africa, the Vosloorus and Daveyton Peace Committee Civic. Then there's the Johannesburg cluster, Soweto and Orange Farm, the Thembelihle Committee, two affiliates in Alexandra, three new ones in the North West Province. The APF Executive Committee meets fortnightly, with a representative from each affiliated organization, and we have a Coordinating Committee that meets monthly, with five representatives from each group. We are trying to organize regional solidarity committees so that people can come out to support each other immediately they hear about an eviction or a water cut-off. In Thembelihle, an informal shack settlement of some 4,000 stands, they're facing forced removals—often at night. That's when the City Council send the security men in, the Red Ants as they're known, from the colour of their overalls. Two or

three thousand people will turn out to stop the evictions there, because the whole community is under threat. The Council says they have to be moved because the area is dolomitic; but the place they're being shifted to, ten kilometres out, is dolomitic too. Who knows what the real reasons are—it might be class or race: the settlement's next to a middle-class community, largely Asian, that might find the corrugated structures an eyesore.

Emily Nengolo, an activist in the Orange Farm Water Crisis Committee, was shot in her home in February this year in what seems to have been a politically motivated killing. How much violence and harassment does the ANC employ against the poor in the settlements, and against anti-privatization campaigners?

If you want to shift people from the place they've lived in for fifteen years—and from one shack to another, not to proper housing—then you have to bring in the Red Ants, the crowbars, the back-up police. With electricity cut-offs, violence can be unavoidable. People chase away the Eskom men who've come to do the work, and the police are called; in Soweto, Eskom employs its own security company. As to harassing campaigners: they arrest us during marches—you have to apply for permission and they can turn you down, or give permission with restrictions. For instance, during the Kensington 87 trials they said we could picket, but only 200 metres from the court, out of sight. Then people defy that, and the police are called. They use tear gas, rubber bullets, water cannon. It's not all-out violence, but you are threatened with it the whole time—it's always there. Emily's killing was clearly politically motivated, but that could be the specificities of the area, rather than the ANC centre; the local leadership is trigger happy.

To what extent do the APF and SECC draw on the townships' established networks of resistance—or is this wave of struggles something new?

It is a new wave, but it uses the traditions, the fire, the experience of the old days. The SECC is becoming more like a civic; people come to us with their problems because we are the official opposition in Soweto now. The ANC promote us, by attacking us as anti-ANC in their speeches. When they call meetings—and it's always councillors, never the party that does so—we go along to picket them; but they would never dare come to ours.

How has the city itself changed since the apartheid era?

The most striking differences have been the mushrooming of the informal settlements, the transformation of the Central Business District and the new 'edge cities' where big business has relocated to the outer suburbs. In Soweto, the changes have been more gradual: new home-loan developments, in-fill building, more overcrowding with backyard shacks springing up behind the old four-room council houses, now transferred to private ownership; though the Council is trying to reduce the shacks to two per yard. During apartheid, you were always under the thumb of the township manager, inevitably an Afrikaner. A house would be allocated to you; you had to register each child as it was born to allow it to live there. At sixteen, the township manager could say your son had to be sent to a hostel. The idea was total control. A visitor had to have a permit. The Metropolitan Police would check on the Permit List and you could lose the house if their name wasn't on it. They clamped down on overcrowding—influx control, they called it—by sending people back to the homelands. If a husband died, the widow could be sent away. You couldn't put up a shack at the back then without the township manager knowing, though you could get permission for backrooms and garages, where people used to live. Once that repression lifted people started to build where they could—families growing, people coming in, or spilling over. Shack settlements grew up around Soweto. The Sowetan residents would have first preference, or act as landlord for a whole new area.

The changes in the Central Business District have been far more dramatic. That was an all-white area during apartheid, very hostile, with a lot of harassment of blacks. In the late eighties and early nineties there was a big shift of business headquarters to Sandton, in the northern suburbs. Symbolically, the Johannesburg Stock Exchange relocated there, although the big banks have tended to stay in the centre. Whites who had been living in the multi-storey apartment blocks moved out in droves. The landlords made a killing, renting out empty flats and offices to black working-class incomers from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mozambique, Somalia, Zimbabwe. They could crowd ten people into a bachelor flat for 200 rand per month each, without providing proper services. Some of the buildings have been taken over by tenants' committees. Some succeed; others, where the committee takes over the role of the landlord, have been a disaster.

Some people have rejoiced in the emergence of an 'informal city' in central Johannesburg—Saskia Sassen, for instance—hailing it as a 'new space'. This seems to parallel earlier claims that 'black economic empowerment' would sprout from the informal economy.

Formal business has certainly decayed in the city centre, with empty shops, boarded-up office blocks. Maybe a black guy will buy a shop and start selling *pap*, the local food, but there's been no boom of black businesses—prices are still high, and because of the Group Areas Act it's mainly Asians who own the shops and warehouses. There are plenty of traders and hawkers in the streets now, ladies doing other ladies' hair for money and services like that. There are big working-class taxi ranks because the public transport is so bad. But the general economic tendency is very clear: the rich have got richer and the poor poorer. Under the ANC, South Africa has now surpassed Brazil as the most unequal country in the world. According to *Statistics South Africa*, the average African household has got 19 per cent poorer in the past five years, and the average white household 15 per cent richer. Unemployment is now running at 43 per cent of the workforce, with youth unemployment up to 80 per cent in some rural areas. We've lost more than a million jobs. Basic food prices have been soaring. What with the public-spending cuts and the Aids crisis, the situation in the health service is frightening.

As for the 'informal city', it may look more colourful but power relations haven't gone away. The banks and insurance companies have held on to their real estate there, and built themselves huge, fortified complexes with easy access to the arterial freeways out to the suburbs. Now the Council has decided it wants to clean up the Central Business District again. They've targeted over eighty buildings to clear out, through forced evictions. They're trying to limit the traders to certain streets and they are building huge, multi-storey taxi ranks that look like giant prisons, for the *kombis*. Once again, it's a question of control. The hawkers will be given space inside these blocks, so they can't be seen. The Council has set up a new Metropolitan Police Force—the most hated body from the height of the apartheid era. They've got advisers in from the NYPD to train them in Broken Mirror police theory: zero tolerance. The city is becoming a hostile place again. The ordinary police will stop you, especially if you look too dark, and demand to see your papers, just like before. There's a lot of hostility towards undocumented immigrants. Sometimes the Red Ants are used to cordon off a whole area and if

you find yourself inside, without ID, you can get sent off to a detention camp at Lindelani, 50 kilometres from Johannesburg, and processed for deportation. They have trains from there to Mozambique and other places. The camp is run by prominent leaders of the ANC Women's League and operated like a private prison. The government pays per person processed.

How would you compare Mandela's role with that of Mbeki?

Mandela did what many African statesmen try to do: play the role of Caesar. He has freed himself from formal politics so that he can act the grandfather. He can swan in and out, chide the government, cover for Mbeki's stubbornness on AIDS, publicly criticize George Bush—which of course is what Mbeki should be doing. Mandela regularly pops up on tv opening a clinic or a school in the rural areas, sponsored by capital. It shows the great partnership between the private sector, government and people. He likes to behave like Father Christmas: above politics. But whenever there is a crisis, Mandela will be there to oil, smooth and con.

Their styles are very different. Mandela used to run the national ANC meetings like a chief—he would let everyone discuss, and then make the ruling. He's famous for phoning comrades at 3am and calling them 'My boy' in Xhosa, which means you are uncircumcized; an insult, but he gets away with it because of his charisma. Mbeki is much stiffer. He was trained at the Lenin Institute and spent a long time bag-carrying for Oliver Tambo in diplomatic circles in the West. He thinks he is an intellectual but he just talks in convoluted sentences. Internationally he is seen as the sober African statesman, beloved of the World Bank, who is going to help pull the continent up by its bootstraps. But he is quite widely despised, inside the country. Our march at the World Summit on Sustainable Development on 31 August last year was a humiliation for him, it exposed his weakness in his own home-base—we got 20,000 and he could only muster 3,000 even though he had COSATU, the SACP and the South African Council of Churches lined up behind him. He has made a series of blunders: Zimbabwe, AIDS, a corrupt \$5 billion arms deal, letting his insecurity and paranoia show in his attacks on Cyril Ramaphosa and Tokyo Sexwale. His supporters are getting worried. Mandela might have to come in and clean up. Because the real point is that their politics are exactly the same: they share a common project, an identical orientation.

Despite the new groundswell against their neoliberal policies, the ANC can still bank on its popular legitimacy from the anti-apartheid days. What are the prospects of building an independent left alternative and what elements might this contain? Are there any signs of cracks in the ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance?

We do need such a force, but this is still a long way off. When Mbeki attacks the COSATU leaders and the SACP, calling them 'ultra-left'—as he did when he felt threatened by the scale of the anti-privatization mobilization around the WSSD summit—he is basically whipping them into line. And it works. The SACP immediately declared, 'This is our government, our ANC. We will defend it'. The president of COSATU, Willie Madisha, announced: 'We must not let our disagreements overshadow the many areas of agreement'. Mbeki needs COSATU and the SACP to contain the working class and deliver the votes. There's no way he wants to break up the alliance; he just doesn't want them to cross a certain line. There was some vague talk of the SACP running independent candidates, though not in the 2004 elections—but what politics could they stand on that would be distinct from the ANC's?

Nevertheless, workers are losing jobs and the COSATU leadership are under pressure to respond. That's why they hold their yearly general strike—we now call it an Annual General Meeting, because it's such a regular event. They always reassure Mbeki that they are not attacking the ANC but this year's strike, though smaller, was militantly opposed to the government's privatization policy. The workers burned pictures of Mbhazima Shilowa—a former general secretary of COSATU, now the premier of Gauteng Province, the industrial heartland—and shouted him down when he tried to address them, despite the COSATU bosses on the platform chanting 'Viva ANC, Viva Shilowa'. The leadership has captured the bodies of the workers but their souls are wandering around. One day they will connect with other bodies.

Some in the anti-globalization movement say that the working class is finished, that the social movements or even 'civil society' itself are now the leading force for change. But if we're honest, some of these social movements consist of nothing more than an office and a big grant from somewhere or other. They can call a workshop, pay people to attend, give them a nice meal and then write up a good report. They build nothing on the ground. 'Civil society' can be even more problematic, extending to the business sector and to NGOs tendering for contracts for privatized

government services. Of course the working class faces greater obstacles, both political and organizational, with the neoliberal turn of the ANC and other mass parties, and the casualization and de-unionization of labour. But it remains a key component of any alternative left strategy. The high level of unemployment is a real problem here. It does make workers more cautious. We need to organize both the employed and the unemployed, to overcome capital's divide-and-conquer tactics.

What is your assessment of the World Social Forum?

Many on the left here were quite sceptical about the anti-globalization movement to begin with. Naturally, it came under attack from the ANC—people like Trevor Manuel, the finance minister, dismissed it as bored rich kids having fun: 'What do they know about covert struggle? They wouldn't last a day in Robben Island'. But though the WSF has its strengths and weaknesses it is important for us to link up to it: this is the movement of the millennium. Personally, I found the discussion of different methods of struggle at Porto Alegre a very useful one. It was an inspiration to meet up with people from La Coordinadora in Bolivia, Oscar Olivera and others, to find out about what's been going on in the fight against water privatization there. That sort of solidarity can be very powerful in terms of keeping you going through pauses in the struggle.

How would you define the main priorities of the movement?

In terms of general questions, I think the issue of political power remains crucial. Some people attack the idea of targeting state power—the argument that globalization undermines the role of the nation state gets translated into an excuse for avoiding the fight with your own national bourgeoisie. But we in South Africa can't not confront the ANC and Mbeki. American activists can't not confront Bush. The COSATU leaders, the SACP, are happy to fight imperialism everywhere except here at home. It's been good to demonstrate against world summit meetings in Seattle, Genoa, even Doha, but there are problems with following the global elite around—it's not something poor people can afford to do. What if they hold their next conference on the moon? Only millionaire activists will be able to go there.

The point is, we have to build where we are. We have had workshops on the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO and we've got strong people working

on those issues. We've set up structures for the Campaign Against Neoliberalism in Southern Africa. But in the end we had to get down to the most basic questions: what are the problems facing people on the ground that unite us most? In Soweto, it's electricity. In another area, it is water. We've learned that you have to actually organize—to talk to people, door to door, to connect with the masses. But you have to build with a vision. From Day One we argued that electricity cuts are the result of privatization. Privatization is the result of GEAR. GEAR reflects the demands of global capital, which the ANC are bent on pushing through. We cannot finally win this immediate struggle unless we win that greater one. But still, connecting with what touches people on a daily basis, in a direct fashion, is the way to move history forward.

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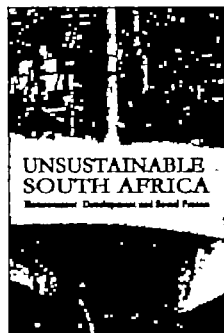
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SUSAN WILLIS

EMPIRE'S SHADOW

DURING THE MONTHS following 9.11, sorters in the US Postal Service were confronted with stacks of mail 'addressed to Osama bin Laden'.¹ Most of these missives were sent on to Afghanistan before investigators from the Justice Department could obtain a warrant authorizing their interception. As the letters were never opened (except perhaps by Osama), we can only speculate as to their content. Many would have conveyed threats: Americans, wanting to relieve the trauma of attack by taking some immediate action, pouring out their anger and frustration against the perceived agent of their distress. Perhaps some of the letters were laced with anthrax. It is just as likely, though, that they were infused with perfume. The women who reported to their analysts that they were haunted by the dream of sleeping with bin Laden may equally have taken the opportunity to pen the terrorist some lines of seduction. Would the ghastly, aesthetic face of Osama flash a smile upon opening a love letter from an American? Or would such a message be the kiss of death, a defilement more toxic than anthrax?

Whether curse or invitation, the letters bespeak a naive attachment to the real. At a time when most Americans communicate by e-mail, a page—typed or hand written, folded in an envelope, stamped, addressed and designated for actual physical transport—represents a tangible link to that longed-for condition. To write to Osama is to enact a form of sympathetic magic whereby the phantom terrorist, the haunting visage seen on video feeds from Al Jazeera, becomes a man of flesh, blood and bone. Just as children post their messages to Father Christmas at the North Pole as a means to dispel disbelief—to confirm Santa as

real, through the logic that equates an actual letter with an existing recipient—so Osama, inscrutably mythic to the western imagination, and Afghanistan, remote as the Arctic, are pressed into the mould of the real by the fact of the letters.

This, the age of fundamentalisms—both Christian and Islamic—is also an era of obtuse literal mindedness, anchored in a devotion to the real. The nineteenth century gave birth to the forensic sciences, popularized by the ploy of the fingerprint in detective novels; the twenty-first boasts a host of technologies guaranteed to inscribe us in the real: voice prints, retinal scans, DNA. Marshall McLuhan could once produce a frisson by proclaiming that ‘the medium is the message’, thus indicating that meaning was no longer rooted in what was said but in how it was communicated; we have now entered a world where code is reality, the human genome is our meaning. Struggling to keep up with advances in science, Washington’s newly created Office of Homeland Security seems antiquated at its inception in its attempts to pave the way to the real by compiling information on Americans’ credit-card purchases, travel plans, e-mail and medical records: constructing its citizens as the imagined sum of their data. With the imaginary thus steeped in the tedium of information, and the real reduced to the barren skeleton of code, Americans risk becoming a nation of sleepwalkers, yearning to recover the remnant of the symbolic order in their dreams.

Reductive readings of Lacan have preached the symbolic, the imaginary and the real as discrete categories, but the letters to Osama clearly manifest a blurring of the boundaries: the symbolic impinges on the imaginary so as to force the real into being—although in a version that only exists as a fiction. Slavoj Žižek has recently recommended that ‘we should be able to discern, in what we experience as fiction, the hard kernel of the Real which we are able to sustain only if we fictionalize it’.¹ Had the investigators from the Justice Department been allowed access to Osama’s mail they would no doubt have scanned it for such ‘kernels’, as a basis for bringing the letter-writers to trial—or, in a turn to the unreal, consigning them to the limbo of illegal aiders and abettors of terror, thus reducing the real to banality. Far more interesting are the kernels that will never be known to us, imbricated in each letter-writer’s private fiction.

¹ ‘Osama’s Got Mail’, *Washington Post*, 9 September 2002.

² Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, London 2002, p. 19.

What haunts post-9.11 America is the spectre of the real, the horror that it may one day exceed the code yellow and orange alerts and go all the way to red, thus discovering what true catastrophe is: not sporadic and isolated events—a Trade Tower here, an anthrax letter there—but the final big bang, which will not only validate Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld but obliterate them. This is, of course, as much a figment of the imagination as the notion of an ultimate real somehow 'concealed beneath the layers of imaginary and symbolic veils'. As Žižek argues, the idea of a final, an absolutely distilled 'Real Thing' is 'a fantasmatic spectre whose presence guarantees the consistency of our symbolic edifice'.³

Washington underground

Nowhere is the fantasmatic quality of the real more apparent than in America's shadow government, at whose 'secure, undisclosed location' Vice President Cheney has (to this day) been hiding out. This us Tora Bora consists of forty underground bunkers built into the mountains within a 100-mile radius of Washington. Some of these sites are no longer 'undisclosed'. Mount Weather, in Virginia, is the designated hide-out for the Speaker of the House, Cabinet heads and Supreme Court justices. No mean Afghan cave, the place has been described as a 'small city', with 'vast quantities of office space, room to store the nation's art treasures, sleeping accommodation for several thousand people'—nirvana for the Taliban. Two other features, 'a private reservoir and a crematorium', make clear that it can double as shelter and tomb. Perhaps the government is planning for their own martyrdom.⁴

Another shadow location, Raven Rock, has been earmarked as the underground site for whatever remnant of the military manages to survive a nuclear attack on Washington. It includes 'computers and communication gear . . . a barbershop, dental and medical clinics, and a chapel'. Leaked descriptions characterize the sites as furnished with 1950s efficiency; indeed, many of the bunkers were first built under Eisenhower and replicate, on a grand scale, the fallout shelters that many Americans dug in their back yards.⁵ In reinventing them, our postmodern state betrays its nostalgia for the simple 'us vs them' politics of the Cold War, the comfort of a clearly discernable enemy. What could be more concrete

³ *Desert of the Real*, pp. 31–2.

⁴ 'Secret of the us Nuclear Bunkers', *Guardian*, 2 March 2002.

⁵ 'Notes from the Underground', *Village Voice*, 19 March 2002.

than a bunker carved into the heart of a mountain—proof of an enemy real as rock?

Family fictions

As referential point of origin, the 1950s represent the fantasized ur-moment of American history, before the social upheavals wrought by the movements for Civil Rights and women's equality, and of resistance to the war in Vietnam—a time when, we imagine, the nuclear family really did exist. The mirage was turned into fact a decade later in the tv sit-com, *Leave It To Beaver*, which provided an image of the 1950s family as a memorable reality, whose Mom-and-Pop scenario continues to be inscribed in the American popular-culture imaginary. Visitors to the Prime Time Diner at Disney World will find 'Mom' in her apron serving up a healthy dinner of meatloaf and mashed potatoes, with Jell-O for dessert—restaging, with each enactment, the 1950s as our socially centred reality. Happy, then, the employees of the shadow government who are dispatched back in time to their bunkers. Acting like characters in a top secret drama, they are only allowed to tell their families that they are off 'on a business trip'.⁶

Here we strike the kernel of reality in the midst of subterfuge: the privilege of the patriarchal breadwinner, whose comings and goings the 1950s housewife knew not to question, now catapulted into the twenty-first century and recreated in the post-apocalyptic shadow state. Underground twenty-four hours a day, on ninety-day rotations, the American officials entombed in this bureaucratic purgatory must dream of the freedom of their 1950s counterpart: the travelling salesman whose 'business trip' would have included the pastimes of a cheap hotel, its efficiency decor a proper setting for the pleasures of whisky and a compliant woman. What do the hundreds of employees relegated to the us shadow government do all day—and night? Presumably nothing, as Washington has yet to be hit. None of the accounts of their caves mention video libraries, stock-piled with morale boosters like Bruce Willis's *Die Hard* trilogy or, perhaps more appropriate, *Armageddon* (in which Willis saves the earth from a catastrophic collision with an asteroid). Perhaps, in keeping with the 1950s reference point, underground employees are encouraged to bring snapshots and videos of their families: like the California schoolchildren,

⁶ 'Shadow Government is at Work in Secret', *Washington Post*, 1 March 2002.

urged to pack a photo in their earthquake kits along with the flashlight, bottled water and nutritious snacks, shadow functionaries are probably forced to live the ideology of a panic intended to preserve the family unit as the core of American life. On the other hand, even photos might be prohibited in the bunkers; how else to maintain secrecy? Unlike those messy Al Qaeda operatives, caught with their tell-tale paraphernalia—journals, letters, photos, videos, cell phones and laptops—America's spectral officials must vanish into the secure sites without a trace. As shadows of the real, they must be utterly anonymous.

Thus we come full circle: from the rock-hard concrete to the insubstantial; from the bunker government, configured as the real referent for the symbolic performance of George Bush, to the existing government rendered real on the basis of a shadowy, non-functioning void. Similarly, Žižek documents 'the fundamental paradox of our "passion for the Real": it culminates in its apparent opposite, in a theatrical spectacle'.⁷ On the eve of Bush's inauguration, many Americans saw Cheney as the power behind the throne, the heavyweight, the reality principle to Bush's inept, befuddled figurehead of state. Such an interpretation was confirmed by Bush himself when (in his usual commanding prose) he explained that he felt 'an obligation as president [to] put measures in place that, should somebody be successful in attacking Washington, DC guarantee there's an ongoing government . . . That's one reason why the vice president was going to undisclosed locations.'⁸ In this scenario, the president is expendable, a visible target, while the vice president is preserved as the actually existing source of continuity. But if Cheney spends most of his heir-apparent life underground, are not Americans apt to forget him? True, he does surface from time to time to attend shadowy meetings with energy executives, after which all documents are either shredded or sequestered. Thus, the heavyweight becomes phantom and the lightweight becomes real.

Government cloned

Jacques Lacan has proposed Hamlet's 'play within a play' as a case of truth registered in fiction. The prince uses the little drama to create a structure, a dimension of 'truth disguised' as a fiction in order to make

⁷ *Desert of the Real*, p. 9

⁸ 'Congress Not Advised of Shadow Government', *Washington Post*, 2 March 2002.

Claudius betray himself. It is not the narrative (Claudius pouring the poison in the erstwhile king's ear), but the play scene as a structure that reveals the truth of Hamlet's Oedipal quandary: in seeing the performed action, Hamlet catches himself allied with his father's murderer, complicit with him in the desire for his mother.⁹ Here, the real is not a kernel, conveniently rock hard and discernable through the veil of fiction; it is instead the very structure, the warp and weft of the veils.

America's play within a play reveals a different structure: the incest not of Oedipus but of cloned replicants. The elaborate underground system of bunkers is not the only shadow government. The Bush White House is also paralleled by the fictional presidency of Josiah Bartlett in NBC's *West Wing*. Inaugurated during the Clinton era, Martin Sheen's rendition of the president was a left-liberal dream. While Clinton was busy instituting a neo-conservative economic agenda and driving coffin nails into welfare and health care, Jed Bartlett was fighting to maintain the country's social-safety net. Because *The West Wing* was so clearly Clinton's foil, many devoted viewers felt the show would lose its relevance with the Bush presidency. The fictional Bartlett and the real Bush would simply be polar opposites, unable to generate grist for utopian desires.

While *West Wing* narratives are indeed liberal fantasies, the key to understanding the role the show plays may be found in yet another fictional shadow government. Unveiled on CBS's *60 Minutes*, a revival of *Point, Counterpoint* is a weekly wrangle between Clinton and Bob Dole. In their debates, the former president and the former presidential candidate shadow the Bush government with alternative visions of what once was or might have been. Thus, viewers can experience a full range of parallel realities (for example, Bartlett intervenes to prevent a Rwanda-like genocide), all the while de-realizing the Bush narrative. Here, the question is not which presidency is a fiction and which real, or whether the unseen vice president is the true puppet master. Rather, the structure of all these clones reveals what many Americans believe to be the truth of the Bush presidency, that it is itself a fiction produced out of voter fraud and Supreme Court chicanery. Not that Al Gore then emerges as the last bastion of the real. Neither shadow nor real, Gore has become taboo, the *homo sacer* of the political world. Notwithstanding his desperate attempts to make himself real by putting on weight, growing a

⁹ Jacques Lacan, *Le Désir et son Interprétation*, Paris 2000, p. 286.

beard and muttering criticisms of the president's war policy, Gore lost his chance to be a shadow when he was summarily cancelled as a political personage in Florida. Only replicants and shadows can play at being president because the truth of the presidency is its clones, whose function is to diffuse reality across a spectrum of fictions.

Americans were given the opportunity to structure their daily lives as clones of the shadow government when Tom Ridge, head of Homeland Security, suggested each household turn a room into an impromptu fall-out shelter. His advice came during one of the orange alerts when the nation was admonished to be extra vigilant. To channel citizens' anxieties into constructive shopping and home maintenance, Ridge advised that a simple application of plastic sheeting and duct tape could seal a room against chemical attack. The numbers of people who raced out to buy the tape were equal to those who made duct-tape jokes. In the end, Ridge retracted his advice when he realized that some Americans might prematurely hole up in their cellophane cocoons and suffocate, without ever getting to test their shelters in a real chemical attack. The best bunker clones were the war protesters who turned up at demonstrations wrapped, head to toe, in plastic sheeting and duct tape, turning their bodies into metaphors and thus resurrecting the symbolic. Their antitheses were those who flocked to Baghdad as 'human shields', the body here usurping the metaphor and offering itself as a real though puny buffer to attack.

Copy and save

Despite the numbers killed, the attacks on the WTC failed to extinguish any of the high-profile investment companies lodged in the towers. This is because businesses, unlike humans, clone their operations into backup files. For instance, 'Fiduciary Trust lost 87 of its 647 employees in the towers. Despite the tragic loss of life and the disappearance of its hardware infrastructure, the company was quickly up and running from a Comdisco recovery centre located in New Jersey.'¹⁰ Comdisco is one of many data-management firms that offer secure storage for the materials that constitute business as a physical body. The field leader is Iron Mountain, which operates 600 facilities worldwide, eight of them hundreds of feet underground. Like those of the shadow government, the

¹⁰ 'Read this, then go back up your data', *Fortune*, Winter 2000.

company's facilities originated in the Cold War, the authorities apparently envisaged a need to save documents as well as people from Soviet attack. Today, Iron Mountain provides storage (and shredding capabilities) 'for all major media, including paper, computer disks and tapes, microfilm and microfiche, master audio and video tapes, films and optical disks, x-rays and blueprints'.¹¹ One of Iron Mountain's recently acquired facilities is a vast limestone mine, north of Pittsburgh. Formerly home to government documents, this facility once 'stored applications from every person who ever sought a Social Security number'.¹² Its catacombs will now become final resting place for the Bettman Archive of 75 million photographic originals. At minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit and 35 per cent relative humidity, the repository will guarantee the durability of images such as that of the young John Kennedy Jr saluting his father's coffin.¹³

This life in death, the preserved entombment of American documents, betrays, again, a stubborn attachment for the real at a time when copies drive consumption. Digital media render vhs and audiotapes as obsolete as phonograph records. Is this the democratized work of art, Walter Benjamin's dream come true? According to Benjamin, mechanical reproduction has the powerful effect of eliminating the aura of traditional art—its privileged uniqueness—precisely because it delivers a copy to the beholder or listener 'in his own particular situation'. Benjamin celebrated the replica and saw in it 'the tremendous shattering of tradition' that was directly opposed to fascism's treasuring of tradition.¹⁴

Rather than supplanting the need for an original, the duplicate craves its own and demands that we designate some reproductions as more authentic than others. Post-fascist and postmodern, we have concretized certain lucky copies. Bunkered documents become the real, the more so since they will never be seen, only scanned and transmitted by computer. Buried in mines which no longer function as part of the steel industry or the subsequent 1950s bureaucracy, these copies become the authorized referents for the millions of clones that circulate above ground in our homes, shops, libraries and institutions. Stepping into the

¹¹ 'DSI Overview' at www.national-underground.com.

¹² 'Mining the hills for storage', *Post-Gazette*, 12 June 1998.

¹³ 'History Goes Underground', *Presentations*, August 2001.

¹⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', in Hannah Arendt, ed., *Illuminations*, New York 1968, p. 221.

brave new virtual world, we immediately find ourselves back in Plato's cave where 'the truth [is] literally nothing but the shadows of images'. The conceit of the cave recasts the notion of a play within a play, this time not from Hamlet's perspective but that of the actors. Ignorant of how the interplay of light on objects creates shadows, they 'see only their shadows' and concoct a sublime world where reality is the imaginary. Plato, obliged to disabuse the chained watchers of their mystification, expands the optic to show that the shadows are mere appearance. Iron Mountain, however, allows Americans to overcome the need for demystification: it makes the shadows real.¹⁵

Ultrasonic paranoia

What better way to do so than with home radar—the ultimate security device? Developed as one of the miracles of the Second World War, radar was mythologized in the 1950s for a generation confronting the contradictions of science and technology. While Disney touted atomic energy as the housewife's friend, offering cartoons of nuclear-powered vacuums and toasters, American schoolchildren were drilled in how to 'duck and cover' under their desks. In an atmosphere of Cold War anxiety, science teachers undoubtedly found relief in telling the story of how radar was stolen from the bat. Like Levi-Strauss recounting a Bororo myth, the teacher explained the animals' magic use of sound waves to render objects readable, if not actually visible. Bat physics overcame the metaphysical question of whether an object must be seen, or heard, to be real. Radar can give us a shadow where we thought there was nothing.

No longer a technology reserved for the military, radar offers unlimited possibilities for securing private spaces. Many American homes are now equipped with motion-triggered outdoor lighting systems; the suburban home of the not-too-distant future may well be secured with a radar device like the one currently produced by Israel Aircraft Industries. Marketed as suitable for 'officials' residences' the Minder, which can be installed along a fence line, is ready for democratization to meet the bunkering needs of private families. The Minder is only one example of hundreds of lightweight and portable radar systems, some specifically designed to be mounted on suvs.¹⁶ Once radar becomes a standard automotive accessory like the GPS navigating system, citizens will be able to

¹⁵ *Dialogues of Plato*, tr. Benjamin Jowett, New York 1927, p. 772.

¹⁶ www.iai.co.il

stow their shovels and duct tape for the convenience of a family-sized mobile bunker—until someone, like the war protester clothed in plastic sheeting, applies anti-radar stealth paint to his body and becomes an anti-matter real threat that the Minder cannot translate into a shadow.

Taking Pineland

Shadow invasions happen on a regular basis in North Carolina where the Army conducts Operation Robin Sage four times a year. Intended to give Green Beret trainees a taste of unconventional warfare, Robin Sage is a play within a play, the consequences of which can be deadly. According to the military's scenario, ten of the state's central counties—all rural and somewhat impoverished—are scripted as the beleaguered nation of Pineland which has been taken over by a repressive government. The action begins when 'some two hundred aspiring Green Berets [are] inserted behind "enemy lines" by parachute, helicopter or plane'. Their mission is to topple Pineland's puppet government.¹⁷

The distinction between fiction and reality is considerably blurred because civilian locals are allowed to play various parts. Sometimes they represent members of the resistance, but they can just as easily be guerrilla fighters allied with the tyrannical government. Costumes offer no help in discerning who is military and who is civilian. Actors from the real army might wear camouflage but, because the script calls for unconventional war, they can also don civilian attire. Similarly the locals, carried away with enthusiasm for their parts, often purchase their own camouflage clothing from the state's numerous Army Surplus Stores. Residents have been known to 'construct fake bombs from pvc and traffic cones' and a few 'have also bought their own semiautomatic rifles for use in the exercises.'¹⁸

Staged over a period of weeks, its scenes and acts occurring randomly across a 4,500 square-mile swathe of countryside, the play is sporadic and unpredictable. Weapons lend excitement. According to the Army's script, no real soldier may carry live ammunition. But because North Carolina is a gun-toting state, citizens would be foolish not to duck and cover at the sound of gunfire. Thus, when Jessica Keeling 'heard a

¹⁷ 'Play Fighting', *Wall Street Journal*, 26 February 2002.

¹⁸ 'Tragedy Infiltrates a Bragg Tradition', in *Washington Post*, 3 March 2002; 'Play Fighting', 26 February 2002.

spray of mock machine-gun fire behind the Citgo filling station . . . she quickly locked the doors, herded customers playing video poker into the store's walk-in refrigerator and dialed 911.' Keeling was an unscripted local, who without knowing it, fulfilled a role in what turned out to be a hostage-rescue scene staged by the Army at the body shop next door. Other unscripted locals have been chased and rounded up by military operatives who had mistaken them for locals scripted as guerrilla fighters. And one unscripted elderly couple was recently held at gun-point in their home by soldiers decked out with face paint, camouflage and M-4 carbines.¹⁹

In last year's dramatization, one incident stands out as a show stopper. It involved three categories of players: two soldiers disguised as civilians; a scripted local to act as the soldiers' driver, using his own civilian vehicle; and an unscripted local sheriff's deputy. The scene began when the deputy ordered the vehicle to pull over. Presuming he was playing the role of a guerrilla fighter who had stolen a law-enforcement officer's uniform, the soldiers went for their duffle bag to retrieve a disassembled rifle. Responding instantly to the perceived threat, the deputy—who did not know that he had stumbled into a play, and was carrying live ammunition as part of his real law-enforcement role—shot the two men, one of them fatally.

More complicated than Hamlet's mousetrap, Operation Robin Sage's play defines all as fiction. If the various renditions of the shadow government reveal that the truth is a clone, Robin Sage demonstrates that only death is real. The deputy's fatal act opens a Pandora's box of possible meanings. One of these casts him as a neo-conservative Hamlet who lashes out at life's blurred edges by driving the hard wedge of reality between truth and fiction. Another version sees him as a beleaguered local civil servant who kills a representative of a larger, stronger Federal force in a desperate attempt to reclaim jurisdictional rights to the Homeland. In this reading the Army (not the fictional government of Pineland), is the invader. Both interpretations contain kernels of truth but neither explains the sort of world that exists around the nation's military bases. Here, there is no clear distinction between military and civilian life. Locals are former soldiers, spouses of soldiers, or employees in businesses that cater to soldiers. They are the shadows whose real

¹⁹ 'Play Fighting', 26 February 2002.

lives feed the needs of the military, who in turn see themselves defending the lives of the locals.

Commenting on the post-9.11 world order and its new forms of warfare, Žižek asks: 'are not "international terrorist organizations" the obscene double of the big multinational corporations—the ultimate rhizomatic machine?' While terrorists and corporations tell different stories, they are united by a common deterritorialized global structure. As such, they demonstrate that contradictions at the level of narrative are overcome by a rhizomatic truth that spans the globe to sprout here and there in the guise of locally specific entities.²⁰

The counties surrounding the Army's Fort Bragg in North Carolina may seem nondescript, a tangle of pine forest, farms, fields and forsaken townships. But the appearance of abandonment belies the compaction of global capitalism's rhizomatic structure. Not a far-flung network binding terrorist to multinational corporation, but a microcosmic spot on the map where points of difference are fused to produce hybrid entities. Here, the rootball forms a dense, entangled mass that gives rise to myriad permutations of manipulated soldier and civilian DNA. The shadow other is subsumed in the self, and the bunker is the world all around.

²⁰ *Desert of the Real*, p. 38.

LAW VERSUS POLITICS

POLITICS AND LAW have long entertained close but fraught relations. I define politics here as society's deliberations and decisions in response to the particular problems or crises it encounters. An appropriate course of action has to be formulated to deal with each specific situation—one that tallies, of course, with the main goals of that social order: its preservation and the furtherance of its own values and interests. Law, on the other hand—defined as the commandment that prescribes or prohibits certain modes of behaviour, under threat of sanction—aspires to be as general and as constant as possible, to apply equally to all members of society, to endure. Emergency legislation, rushed through in response to circumstances, always has a bad name. Law discounts individual particularities and the uniqueness of any given situation. To act under its aegis is to apply a norm, to subsume a particular case under a general rule.

Thus defined, politics and law represent two modes—both antagonistic and complementary—of governing society. Antagonistic, because politics is the improvisation of a riposte to a specific, unforeseen event, whereas law, aiming to establish uniform standards of behaviour and social stability, submits action to pre-ordained rules. Politics and law therefore oppose each other as singular versus general, innovation versus the application of set forms. The two are nevertheless complementary, since their relationship is one of mutual dependence. Law encases and constrains politics—at least in the case of those regimes that have some respect for legal conventions and rights; but it is politics that makes the law and, as the case demands, remakes it. The adoption of a new law is one of the responses that politics can make to an event. Neither law nor politics can pretend, therefore, to a monopoly over society. A social order run solely according to existing laws would either be one in which all eventualities had been foreseen and government

could restrict itself to administration; or one that condemned itself to be wrongfooted by every external development. Conversely, a society wholly without law would be either anarchic or despotic; in either case it would be subject to permanent instability, totally unpredictable for its members and its neighbours, rapidly becoming intolerable for both. Like hostile brothers, politics and law are both implacable and inseparable. The problem, then, is to allow each its proper part in government, to trace a line of demarcation between them that will permit us to distinguish what should pertain to each, in any given case. A difficult task, as the 'objective' characteristics of the situation are not the only issues at stake: a predisposition towards change or conservation, equality or difference, will incline a society to privilege either politics or law.

The antiquity of the debate is well established. In classical discussions on the limits and insufficiencies of law the sovereign's refined intelligence, capable of devising a specific solution for each particular problem, was considered far preferable to the coarse brutality of legislation, which applied identical treatment to such a varying range of individuals and situations. As I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere, this critique of law is one of the rare instances where Plato, in *The Statesman*, is in agreement with his Sophist enemies. Thucydides expresses himself on the question in his customary roundabout manner: the eulogy to law, in the face of those 'superior spirits' who think themselves above it, is entrusted to the demagogue Cleon. The intention in this essay, however, is not to present the debate in its entirety or trace each stage of its development; but rather, focusing on the modern period, historically defined—that is, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries—to look at four 'snapshots' of the discussion through the work of four different authors, in the hope of identifying some of its essential features.

The illegal Prince

First snapshot: Machiavelli. The hegemonic thought of the Middle Ages kept politics within very narrow limits, obliging it to respect both the divine will—as interpreted and transmitted by the Church—and the natural and social order, determined by celestial authority. Machiavelli's great innovation, of course, was to free politics from the yoke of religion. His starting point was the proposition that the existence of law and morality supposes the existence and preservation of the state, within whose shelter they find a space to operate and regulate human affairs.

Outside the state, or prior to its birth, neither law nor morality can exist; its founders will therefore be unconstrained by these two factors, and, in the absence of law, it is politics that dominates the entire terrain. If the creation of the state is the Prince's privileged task, it follows that he must dedicate himself to politics, above all else.

This vital link between the Prince and politics does not cease with the state's foundation. He remains its guardian in the face of multiple threats, whether internal—conspiracies, sedition—or external: invasions and wars. Moreover, the state is doomed to corruption and decline, and is therefore compelled to undergo a periodic regeneration (every ten years, Machiavelli advises) which amounts to a virtual re-founding. Throughout this period, and in face of every danger, the Prince finds himself in the same situation as before the state was established; its defence is to be assured by all the means at his disposal, even illegal ones, since if it falls, law too will disappear. Hence the formulation of those maxims that have given Machiavellianism its diabolical name. The Prince alone must retain all power and may resort to any means, even murder, to protect his monopoly; he must be both beast and man, and able to imitate the fox as well as the lion; he must know how to feign and betray trust, how to identify and instigate effective cruelty. His only obligation to obey the laws is a political one: if he scorns them too openly he will attract his subjects' hatred, so he must flout them with some circumspection. The Prince's total liberty in this respect is justified not only by the necessity of safeguarding the state, and therefore the very possibility of law, but by the inconstancy of men and fortune to which he must be able to adapt, unfettered by legal constraints. Here the unchanging nature of the law makes it an obstacle to the necessary flexibility of politics.

However, a prince worthy of his title should only transgress the law to recreate or restore it—the primary aims of politics, to which all other goals are subordinate; outside of these, a prince is a mere adventurer. The contrast between means and ends puts the Prince in a contradictory situation, well described in the *Discourses*: to use violence to become the sole master is the act of a wicked and ambitious man; yet the intention to found or reform the state can only originate with a good one. What, then, can drive the Prince to become engaged in such a difficult and perilous undertaking? For Machiavelli the answer is clear: the only motive strong enough is desire for glory, for the immortality of posthumous remembrance. Aside from founding a religion, it is the creation of a state

that earns a man most glory—for it is the state that permits the advent of law which, alone, renders social life possible. Man's inherent wickedness is for Machiavelli both a necessary hypothesis and an established fact. 'Men will always do badly by you unless they are forced to be virtuous', states *The Prince*; and the *Discourses* maintain that 'men never do good unless through necessity . . . the laws make them good.'¹ The law here is essentially seen as a restraint, and one can appreciate the merits of anyone capable of imposing it upon the malevolent multitude. If, however, all men were equally wicked, none of them would want the law, and the founder's task would be impossible. If he succeeds, it is because the community is divided and, at its heart, he has found allies to build the state and implement the law; the social fracture at stake is that between the mighty and the people, and the people support the Prince.

Law and the people

The chief desire of the people is that they should not be oppressed. They want liberty, but this is synonymous with security, for both individuals and property. Only law can provide such security; so liberty becomes entangled with the power of law, and the people—to be distinguished from the populace at large—'wish to be governed by laws'. In addition, the people are particularly suited to maintaining and applying the laws. Here, the period of the law's foundation needs to be distinguished from that of its conservation: 'If princes show themselves to be superior at creating laws, providing a state with a constitution or establishing a new form of government, the people are so superior at maintaining the established order that, indeed, they add to the glory of their legislators.'² The people, however, are wholly unsuited to politics for three important reasons: they are incapable of unity, and need a leader in order to identify and constitute themselves as a group; they have no capacity for discernment and are deceived by appearances; finally, they do not possess that active, free-moving spirit that can adapt to changing circumstances and seize opportunities as they arise. The best government is thus one that can achieve a sort of division of labour between Prince and people: politics to the Prince, upkeep of law to the people; or, as the *Discourses* say, the best institutions are those which reconcile the tranquillity of the people and the power of the Prince.

¹ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, xxiii, London 1961, p. 77; *Discourses on Livy*, Book 1, 3, Chicago 1996, p. 15, translations modified.

² *Discourses*, Book 1, 58.

We find here, in a slightly different form, the relationship of reciprocal dependence between politics and law evoked above: law depends on politics for its existence, since only politics is capable of establishing its rule; but politics depends entirely on law for its worth and meaning, since it is only justified—only glorious—if its end is the rule of law. For Machiavelli, however, law remains afflicted by a threefold weakness. Firstly, it is prey to the inescapable corruption that affects all worldly things, and which here proves both simple and deadly: 'There is no law or constitution which can restrain this universal corruption, for as good morals need to be maintained by laws, so laws require good morals to be observed.' The degradation of morals necessarily contaminates laws. Further, the institutions, legal and otherwise, that are appropriate to a healthy state are not necessarily right for a corrupted one; they are endowed with a form of inertia that prevents them from changing in accordance with the times. Of course, royal authority can be used as a temporary substitute for law, but a state that rests on this constraint alone is very vulnerable: for law is nothing without the support of those who submit to it.

Law demands adherence and to obtain it, can rely on nothing but its own merits; this is its second weakness. For Machiavelli, law can no longer appeal to divine power for support since God—if he exists—is absent and indifferent. Certainly, the Prince can resort to the illusions of religion in order to obtain the consent of his future subjects; but today such a recourse would be in vain since Christianity, contemptuous of things here below, weakens the state rather than consolidating it. Nor can law find any guarantee in nature, for if man is, as we have seen, naturally wicked, then law by definition can only be against nature: a construction, an artifice. As Althusser shows very well, Machiavelli aligns himself here against all past and future doctrines of natural law. In the same move, the Prince can literally count on nothing to help him found his state and introduce the law.⁴

In the end, the only source and protection for law is the strength and determination of the Prince and this is, perhaps, its greatest weakness. As far as strength is concerned, the Prince is alone—and can only found the state if he is so. What might gird his determination? The Prince will

³ *Discourses*, Book I, 18.

⁴ *Machiavelli and Us*, London and New York 1999, pp. 33–52.

only have a future if he can find and retain the support of the people, but this depends on his ability to moderate his violence and appetites. He is thus in a paradoxical position, the source of a unique vulnerability: as founder of the state, he is exempt from any legal restraint; but an authority without limit or temporal bounds is always dangerous. 'Whoever is not restrained by legal constraints will commit the same faults as an unchained multitude'.⁵ An unchained Prince is much madder and harder to control than an unrestrained populace. The risk here is that he will renounce the wish for the state and law and abandon himself to his own passions, falling back into the ruck of the mighty, who are slaves to their own appetites. As a result, he will forgo the support of the people and lead his state to ruin.

Of course, no contemporary theorist or political figure would accept the renunciation of the double guarantee—divine and natural—that Machiavelli had declared illusory; Althusser is right to emphasize his 'solitude'. Whether Catholic or Protestant, the thinkers of the period continued to draw inspiration from St Paul's celebrated passage in Romans 13:1: 'there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God'. This text was, as has often been noted, the foundation for a sort of state's right, independent of any Christian allegiance on the Prince's part; even a pagan state is God's will, and demands due obedience. This divine guarantee was, of course, applied in different ways to different cases. For the doctrinaire defenders of absolute monarchy and divine right, such as Bossuet, it refers directly to the personage of the king and his wishes, which effectively correspond to laws. For Vittoria, power is given by God to the state, which it in turn transmits to the king of its choice. In both cases, God remains behind the law to affirm and sanctify it. As for the natural guarantee, it is in origin indissociable from its divine counterpart, since nature is nothing more than God's creation. It does not acquire its own autonomous power of legitimation until much later; first, it will have to go through a stage of complete fusion with God, marked by the thought of Spinoza.

Lawlessness of fallen nature

Our second snapshot comes several decades before the evolution just invoked. Starting from very different considerations, Pascal launches another assault against law's natural and divine guarantees. In many

⁵ *Discourses*, Book I, 58.

respects, he is Machiavelli's opposite: the fervent Christian to his sceptic, seeking only to preserve divine power and grace, while Machiavelli wished to assert the primacy of politics. There are, however, remarkable convergences in their respective critiques of law.

Pascal premises his argument on original sin: man has been corrupt since the Fall, and is in thrall to two passions, vanity and sexual desire. God is hidden, and nothing remains of our unfallen state save a blind aspiration towards infinity. Lacking an adequate object, this yearning is currently focused on the self; man feels an unbounded love for himself (pride), and wants to conquer the entire universe and annex it to him (lust). The predominance of these two emotions produces a state of generalized hostility between men: each aims for supremacy but not all can achieve it—either in material terms (lust) or in glory (pride). As a result, 'all men naturally hate one another'. As with Machiavelli, there is no natural sociability; the city is an artifice, devised and constructed against nature.

Pascal's starting point is the geographical variation of laws. As the famous sixtieth fragment of his *Pensées* states: 'A fine sort of justice that has a river for its boundary! Truth on this side of the Pyrenees, error on the other'. No man-made law can aspire to the universality of the laws of nature. All the same, natural law, if not the basis of juridical law, could perhaps serve as a norm by which to evaluate it. But—alas—even this is forbidden. The Fall has a second consequence: the 'denaturalization' of man. It is sin that creates that contradiction between innocence and corruption, grandeur and wretchedness which, in turn, makes it impossible to define a coherent and consistent concept of man.⁶

There is no human nature, therefore there is no natural law. The first consequence: there is no natural hierarchy among men that would allow some to govern others. As the first 'Discourse on the Condition of the Greats' states, all distinctions which exist between men are 'the greatnesses of establishment'—that is, of convention.⁷ The second consequence: since no natural hierarchy exists, in the final analysis all power rests on superior force. 'Force governs all', Pascal declares without hesitation. The decisive role of force in the genesis of power explains,

⁶ *Pensées*, no. 108. Translations adapted from *Pascal's Pensées*, London 1962, which uses Lafuma's numbering system for the fragments.

⁷ *Pensées*, no. 301 and 1st Discourse of the Greats.

among other things, its primacy over justice—the former determines the content of the latter. ‘As it is not possible to make force obey justice, it has become just to obey force.’ It also explains its dominion over ideas: ‘Force governs the world, not opinion . . . it is force which creates opinion.’⁸ It accounts for the rule of the majority: in a battle, the most numerous will prevail. Finally, it tells us why Pascal dismisses the notion that a social contract could give birth to a city. For Hobbes, the war of all against all is perpetual because the protagonists are roughly of the same strength; the contract is the only means of bringing it to an end. For Pascal, on the contrary, it is force that will decide.

On its own, however, force is not sufficient to found a durable state; the pride and self-love of the governed will be wounded and this will push them towards revolt, causing instability. The people are perfectly prepared to obey reason and justice, as these are impersonal authorities; but they refuse to bow down to power, as this would submit them to an individual’s caprices. Nor will strength alone suffice for those who rule: their pride drives them to want to control not just bodies but souls—to be not only feared and obeyed, but loved and admired. Here the influence of force comes to an end.

Let us recall Pascal’s theory of orders. Reality is divided into incommensurable orders that are separated by insurmountable barriers. An agent arising in one order can only operate there; no meddling or interference between them is possible. The model for this theory is mathematical: if we consider the point, the line, surface and volume, we see that each of these discrete elements has no meaning for the next. The same applies to the social world, where two distinct orders exist: that of the flesh, governed by force, the sphere of kings; and that of the mind, where truth and justice rule and scholars hold sway. There is no common measure, no passage, no causality between the two; it is thus in vain that force strives to be loved.

Force as justice, law as illusion

Here again we encounter the problem of the relationship between force and justice. Alone, neither one nor the other can form the basis of lasting power: ‘Justice without force is impotent, force without justice is

⁸ *Pensées*, nos. 767, 81, 554.

tyrannical. Justice without force is impotent because there are always men motivated by malice. Force without justice is tainted.' Moreover, if force and justice are separated they will inevitably be at war with one another, and there can never be a decisive outcome. They must therefore be combined; but there are two different ways of doing this. Either one can 'make strong that which is just', namely provide justice with the means to impose itself; or conversely one can 'make just that which is strong'—recognize the powers that exist and grant their legitimacy as such. The first solution would initially seem to be the best; but sadly it is untenable, for the same reasons that earlier demanded the rejection of natural law. As there is no definable human nature, it is impossible to determine man's rights and responsibilities in a way that would provide an indisputable content to the idea of justice, which otherwise can only give rise to interminable debates—as justice, like reason, is 'bendable' in every sense. It is precisely this that distinguishes it from force, which is a tangible given, 'clearly recognizable and beyond dispute'.⁹

Since it is impossible to fortify justice, force has been justified instead. Once again, this is not the result of a perverse decision, due to man's evil nature: it is effectively impossible to submit force to something as variegated, shifting and elusive as justice. Thus the effects of force have been ratified, and declared just. In other words, laws that have been fashioned in each country by custom and tradition have been given the seal of justice. Introduced by force, sustained by inertia, they must now be called just in order that the people, who only obey what they believe to be just, will respect them. Of course, they vary from country to country; wisdom therefore consists in holding as just the laws of wherever one happens to be.

The operation of justifying force has a dual character: it implies the transformation of force into justice—thus transmuting a fact into a value—but also a violation of the frontier between the orders of flesh and of mind. Force comes from the flesh and should command nothing but fear; yet here one is asking for it to be called justice, a quality of mind which commands respect. Only one human faculty can perform this mutation and violation: the imagination, which has the power to alter reality and make the nonexistent appear to be. As soon as force has founded state-power, imagination arrives to provide it with legitimacy

⁹ *Pensées*, nos. 192, 156.

and durability. First of all it represses and dissimulates the origin of the power—which is force; but if this was known, it would never be respected or obeyed, so it must therefore be forgotten. Secondly, imagination produces—just as ideology does, for Marx—an inversion of reality: although the laws are just because they exist, the people think they exist because they are just; they take effect for cause and cause for effect. Of course, the imagination is no substitute for force; it only masks it, and keeps it in reserve. This is why the most unassailable power is that of kings and men of war, who can combine both force and imagination. Power that is founded solely on the imagination—that of judges or doctors—is more fragile. But in both cases, it is the ‘imaginative faculty’ that ‘bestows respect and veneration on people, books, laws, the powerful’.¹⁰

With this foundation, the power of law is both illusion and tyranny: it survives only because the people believe the laws to be just and the powerful naturally superior; if they learned the truth, they would rebel; and the violation of the frontier between orders that the rule of law entails corresponds, for Pascal, to tyranny, which ‘consists of the desire for universal domination, outside of its order.’¹¹ One could propose a subversive, anarchist reading of Pascal’s political philosophy: all powers—those of the law and those of the mighty—are based on force masked by illusion, or the ‘symbolic violence’ of Pierre Bourdieu.

In fact, Pascal’s theory of power leads him to distinguish three possible political stances. Famously, he also identifies three categories or conditions of knowledge, marked on a scale of ignorance. At birth, man is in a state of natural ignorance; at the other extreme, true scholars have understood that their science is nothing and have arrived at a state of enlightened ignorance. Between the two, there are those who have left the first stage of ignorance without reaching the second, who believe they know something and pose as experts. The first condition is that of the people; the second, that of the adept and the third, that of the half-adept. How do they behave with respect to the law?

The people adhere naively to the illusions evoked above; they obey the law because they believe it just, and respect the mighty because they believe them to be superior. The half-adept produce a critique of these

¹⁰ *Pensées*, no. 81.

¹¹ *Pensées*, no. 58.

illusions based on the terms Pascal suggests: the power of laws and rulers is nothing but violence and deception. But being only half-adept, the conclusion they draw from this analysis is that the current laws deserve neither obedience nor respect, and should be replaced by a more just and rational set. They refuse to show any respect to their social superiors and dream of a hierarchy of merit. Yet, as we have seen, justice and merit are unobtainable. The critique of the half-adept leads to irresolvable conflicts: it encourages the people to revolt and ends in civil war, the worst possible outcome. Finally, the adept also know the secret behind the power of the laws and rulers, but they draw a different lesson from it: in order to keep the peace, it is rational to obey established powers and received laws, though not for the reasons that they themselves invoke.

The people, then, make a false diagnosis but adopt the correct course; the semi-adept make a correct diagnosis but adopt a false course; only the adept get both parts right. Pascal's political philosophy seems both rational and ambiguous. Rational in that it takes the reality of our fallen human condition into account, respects the different orders and gives each one its due, bows to established laws and powers. Ambiguous, in that its submission is purely formal and exterior, denying them any legitimacy or inner adherence; for the rulers, such an attitude can only engender a terrible frustration.

Law's part in the general spirit

With the third snapshot, nearly a century later, we are in a very different universe. In Montesquieu, the gap between divine law and man-made ones is taken for granted. The first elicit from him only displays of allegiance as formal as they are ostentatious; his interest is entirely concentrated in this world. As all commentators have noted, Montesquieu redefines law so that it is no longer a commandment but a relation, as in his famous formula: 'Laws . . . are the necessary relations deriving from the fundamental nature of things.'²³ However, Montesquieu also distinguishes between the laws/relations of physical and social nature. In contrast to the former, the latter are not always followed with much rigour, since they apply to men who are ignorant and blind, subject to passions and ultimately free to make their own decisions. As a result their actual laws become more or less distanced according to

²³ *The Spirit of Laws*, Book I, Chapter I, Cambridge 1989, p. 3; translations modified.

circumstances, from the laws/relations of social nature. As for natural law, to which he occasionally refers, since this is derived from the nature of man it, too, is capable of being transgressed, and for the same reasons. We can already see how far Montesquieu is from any form of determinism.

At first sight, Montesquieu appears a fervent advocate of the law, which, for him, both defines liberty and renders it possible. As Machiavelli has already stressed, liberty is first and foremost security, self-determination and protection against arbitrariness or violence. It is, Montesquieu writes in *The Spirit of Laws*, 'the right to do everything the laws permit'. 'We are free,' he continues, 'because we live under civil laws.'¹³ This conjunction of law and liberty permits us to distinguish two principal genres of government: moderate—whether republican or monarchical—and despotic. Under the first, law reigns and the citizen is free; under the second, there is no law and subjects have no protection from the caprices of the tyrant or the mob. Montesquieu, of course, had nothing but contempt and antipathy for despotism; this in itself might demonstrate the importance he accords the law. In fact, he argues that despotism only persists because factors that are not directly political—religion, mores—ensure it a minimum of stability and 'predictability'. More fundamentally, despotism is never absolute, as 'in every nation there is a general spirit upon which power is founded. When it clashes with this spirit, it clashes with itself and inevitably comes to an end.'¹⁴

What are the constituent elements of this general spirit? A wide variety of factors will influence the development of any given region or people: physical—the climate, the soil—or moral. Five elements are particularly important here: religion, the principle of government, laws, customs and manners. But the totality of the general spirit is not a simple aggregate; its components are interdependent, acting and reacting in relation to each other. If one changes, so do the rest, each according to its own rhythm. As a result, the spirit expresses the identity and uniqueness of the nation. But once constituted, the whole, in its turn, acts upon its component parts, directing or inflecting their development; the general spirit is not just result, but agent.

¹³ *Spirit of Laws*, xi, 3 and xxvi, 20

¹⁴ *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence*, chapter xxii, Paris 1968, p. 178.

What place do laws occupy within the general spirit? Firstly, the part cannot contradict the whole; laws must therefore conform to the overall spirit of the nation, and this is the first rule that the legislator must obey. At a stroke, the problem of the best government that so preoccupied antiquity is given a fresh twist: the best government for a people is the one best adjusted to their uniqueness. Secondly, what are the relations between law and the other elements that co-exist within the determining structure of the general spirit? Physical factors need only detain us long enough to refute an occasionally recycled notion: far from professing a form of geographical determinism, Montesquieu explicitly holds that institutions, laws and morals can victoriously oppose the influence of climate or soil. In this context, law has a real capacity for action. The same no longer holds when we enter the realm of moral causes.

Power of habits

Law and religion share common characteristics and a joint field of action: both aim to make man a good citizen. If one factor weakens, the other must be reinforced. This is why religion can substitute for law in assuring the longevity of despotism; it can also come to law's aid. But in other respects there is a split—even an antagonism—between the two: men's laws change, whereas divine ones are immutable; civil legislation seeks to create the good society, religious teaching, the good individual; religion inspires belief, law fear, faith governs the inner world, while laws are limited to external actions. The two can thus be thrown into conflict. Some creeds denigrate worldly life and its institutions; some have been the source of murderous quarrels, ruinous for the state. Consequently, the boundaries between the two and their respective autonomy must be respected, in order to limit the intrusions of religion into the realm of politics and law and, symmetrically, to curtail the invasion of the religious sphere by law.

Distinct from religion, mores—defined in *The Spirit of Laws* as 'habits not established by laws'—govern human behaviour here on earth; they thus share the same territory as law.¹⁵ Mores, however, govern the actions of man, whereas laws regulate those of the citizen. They are instilled, he states, while laws are established; they are closer to the general spirit of the nation, laws to one particular institution or another. The principle of

¹⁵ *Spirit of Laws*, XIX, 16.

the separation of orders applies again here: the law must be changed by law, customs by customs. Indeed, Montesquieu's main emphasis is to demonstrate that the law is incapable of changing national habits, which only evolve through communication, exchange between peoples and the influence of example. There is, furthermore, no equivalence between the two: in the life of both the state and the nation, customs carry more weight than law. In positive terms, a people will be more attached to its way of life than to its laws; rightly so, since customs contribute more to a nation's happiness and the creation of better citizens than legislation does. On the negative side, their violation is more dangerous for the state than law-breaking, and bad examples in this sphere are worse than crimes. The importance of customs varies according to the form of government being considered; they count for most under the republic. But in general, they are more effective than laws—perhaps, *The Spirit of Laws* suggests, because they owe their origin to nature, whereas legislation is the work of ignorant, passionate, fallible mankind.

But the most decisive role is played by the principle of government, the 'motor' driving the state's actions and powering it with energy and life. For Montesquieu, this principle is a 'passion' of which he identifies three fundamental types, each corresponding to a particular form of government: virtue (the republic), honour (monarchy) and fear (despotism). It is the principle of government that most immediately determines the value and effectiveness of law: if it is corrupt, all laws, even the best, grow rotten; if it is healthy, 'the bad have the effect of the good; the power of the principle determines all'.¹⁶

A preliminary set of conclusions may be drawn: the 'separation of orders' rule delimits a relatively narrow sphere for law, which must not interfere with religion and can have no effect on customs. Examination of the various components of the general spirit shows law to play an important but subaltern part, entirely subordinate to the principle of government and counting for much less than mores. Other considerations further reduce its role. Law's goal is the well-being of society and the citizen, not that of the individual—with whom it may therefore come into conflict. Law must justify the particular wrong that it may do the individual by the general good it procures. It must, in a sense, be of some profit to those whom it commands; otherwise it is useless—as in the case of

¹⁶ *Spirit of Laws*, VIII, II.

slavery. From this point of view, society remains founded on mutual advantage and law 'a pure act of power'. In some respects, it is a hindrance: 'laws . . . always grate on the citizens', Montesquieu writes in the *Pensées*. Persuasion is always preferable to force, incentive to obligation, 'for we do nothing better than that which we do freely'.¹⁷ The supreme skill is to invite rather than constrain, to persuade rather than order. Honour is thus stronger than law, passion more inspiring than duty. In short, the law is always a second best, to which one should only resort when it is impossible to do otherwise.

It follows that new legislation should be formulated advisedly and restricted to the issues that fall within law's sphere. 'There are a few good things, a few bad and an infinite number that are indifferent'; by their very nature, the last do not fall within the competence of law. To legislate for them creates useless laws that will be resented as tyrannical and diminish the respect which should surround the rest. Since few governments are capable of avoiding this trap there are far too many laws and, as Montesquieu comments in the *Pensées*, 'the infinite number of things that a legislator permits or prohibits makes the people more discontented and not more reasonable'. If, despite all this, the state persists in creating new laws, they should be both enforceable and enforced: any transgression undermines the authority not simply of the ordinance involved but of the entire body of laws. The effect of this principle is a moderating one, especially on penal questions: power must know its limits, avoid extreme measures, be tolerant and merciful. The same guidelines apply to abuses of the law, many of which—defined and tolerated as such—reveal themselves to be very useful, 'even more so than the most reasonable of laws', as the *Pensées* note. For in general, 'there is an infinity of instances where the least bad is the better' and 'the best is the enemy of the good'.¹⁸

For Montesquieu such axioms entail a powerful distrust of change. Altering the law is dangerous for several reasons. Firstly, it diminishes the due respect that should be felt for the status quo. Secondly, it introduces an element of discord between the nation's general spirit and its administrative machinery: legislation can be changed at a stroke, but habits and modes of thought possess a much greater degree of inertia

¹⁷ *Spirit of Laws*, XIX, 14; *Pensées*, no. 1810 in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, Paris 1951, p. 1434; *Spirit of Laws*, XIX, 5.

¹⁸ Montesquieu, *Pensées*, nos. 1909, 1921, 630, 632.

and evolve according to a different rhythm. Finally, the consequences of any major change are always unpredictable. The wisest course is thus to stick to the existing order, and the best of all governments 'is generally the one under which we live'. Moderation and prudence are, Montesquieu admits, difficult virtues to practise, as they run contrary to the legislator's natural inclinations—his belief that he proves his strength by overthrowing the status quo, and his tendency to think in terms of systems. However, the lawmaker's duty is more often to abstain: the good, in this instance, is silent and invisible, it works like 'a blunted file, which wears away and gradually reaches its end'.¹⁹ For the law, once again, is the creation of men that are prone to passion and error. It is faced with a dilemma: either it conforms to the custom and the general spirit, in which case it is mostly ineffective; or it goes against them, and is either powerless or dangerous.

Passion's ethics

Montesquieu criticizes law from the point of view of society, and demonstrates it to be a poor tool of government. In our fourth snapshot—the Marquis de Sade—it is challenged from the individual's point of view. We need to distinguish here between two faces, or aspects of Sade: philosophic heroism and libertine reform. For Sade, from the basis of a single premise—the utter solitude of man—pursues two distinct projects: the first consists of denying God and society in the name of nature, in order to defy nature in the name of the absolute sovereignty of the individual; the second explores what transformations would be necessary to make the social order habitable, considering that we are passion-driven beings. Though they do not contradict each other, and often deploy similar arguments, the two projects are not addressed to the same audience and do not propose the same goals; the critique of law forms part of the second endeavour.

Sade's starting point, then, is a radical solipsism: the individual is absolutely alone, and his isolation is predicated on the fact that nothing is real to him save his own sensory experience. Consequently, there is no common measure between my sensations, which I know directly, and those of other people, which I can only conjure up in my imagination. All others are foreign to me, and any form of social bond an illusion.

¹⁹ Montesquieu, *Pensées*, no. 632; *Spirit of Laws*, xiv, 13.

Society, in turn, is no more than a conventional trope. Particular and general interests—the individual's and those of society—are necessarily incompatible and contradictory; the first—to its own detriment—must be subordinate, if the two are to be reconciled.

The individual belongs to nature and is subject to its laws. These can be divided into two categories: those that govern nature itself, and those that apply to the human subjects within it. Nature is ruled, firstly, by a law of equilibrium between good and evil, vice and virtue; provided this is maintained, nature itself is indifferent to the isolated acts of man or woman. Secondly, according to the law of conservation, nothing is lost in nature and there is no real destruction; death is only a dissolution of elements which will be reconstituted in some other fashion, a simple variation of forms. But although nature at first sight appears to keep an equal balance between good and evil, in reality—being itself composed of energy and movement—it prefers evil. As all creation supposes prior destruction, nature, eager to create, is also avid to destroy, willing passion and murder. Virtue—as dullness and inertia—is thus against nature.

Nature, then, is indifferent to the deeds and fate of individuals; death is only an appearance; nature privileges the destruction of existing forms in order to produce new ones. From all three, the same conclusion can be drawn: in nature's view, there is no crime. The real offence would be to alter its workings, which is not within our power; the only sin is to resist the impulses it endows us with. Is equality a third law of nature? Sade's characters, of course, confirm or deny it according to their social rank: the bandits proclaim it, the aristocrats are against. For Sade, both are right to act out their will to liberty and power. The inequalities of power are a fact, and the law of the strongest an incontrovertible reality; but each has good reason to attempt to turn the situation to their advantage: action is the only proof of strength.

The laws that govern individuals are linked to the passions with which nature endows us; the moral equivalent of natural energy, these are 'the sole spur to great deeds'.²⁰ In his savage state, man is possessed by two basic drives: to eat and to copulate. To satisfy these needs, he is ready to conquer the universe and eliminate anyone who might hold him back; he is, as Sade puts it, predisposed to 'despotize'. Luxury itself

²⁰ *Juliette*, Book IV, London 1991, p. 734; translations modified.

is a tyrannical passion, since it can only be sated by enslavement. In short, Sade concurs with Machiavelli and Pascal: man is naturally bad. In contrast to his predecessors, however, Sade maintains that the only law nature imposes on man is to satisfy these passions. He must relate everything to himself, take his own interests as the only guide and practise unbounded egoism. Once more: for nature, there is no crime. It has stamped us with our passions—we are not their masters. Thus nature operates as a vindicating principle: all that exists is legitimate; all that is real is rational, as Hegel would soon say. Since human freedom is, in any case, an illusion, we should not be held responsible for what we do. No act is reprehensible if it is carried out in the grip of passion.

Law as crime

If society is an abstract creation, the plurality of individuals is a fact. In the state of nature, the principle of egoism turns the human condition into a war of all against all. Unlike Hobbes, Sade finds this quite acceptable, and in any case preferable to what has followed; it cannot therefore be used to explain and justify the birth of civilization. Nevertheless, civilization has emerged, with its bodyguard of laws that owe nothing to nature—which, on the contrary, they attempt to suppress. They are thus pure artifice, pursuing the social good rather than that of the individual. How are we to understand their genesis, and what are we to make of their self-attributed legitimacy? Laws, as we have seen, cannot be founded in nature or—still less—appeal to God, for Sade a mere fiction, a phantom, a forgery. Do they issue from the will of man? Here we encounter the problem of the social contract. Sade does not contest its existence, but argues that a true pact can only be sealed between equals; the strongest, who will concede nothing, and the weakest, who have nothing to lose, have no reason to abide by it. When it pretends to be universal the contract is a trap, laid either by the weak to tame the strong, or by the strong to forestall the rebellion of the weak. Far from overcoming the divisions of the social body, the pact is merely a ruse deployed by one faction to deceive the other.

If its origins bestow no legitimacy, can law be justified by function? For Sade, the answer is a resounding no. To summarize the principal charges of his indictment: law aims at the good of society, the general interest, which, as we have seen, always contradicts that of the individual. Like the social contract on which it is based, law poses as a fair exchange: the

individual renounces the fulfilment of certain passions and part of his liberty in return for peace and security. Yet the bargain is an unequal one; laws 'take away infinitely more than they bestow'.²¹ It is man who denies himself real satisfactions for the sake of a phantom—society. Law is inherently restrictive. It prohibits us from slaking the impulses and desires with which nature has endowed us and punishes us if we do not respect its injunction. In doing so, law proves itself both impotent—incapable of holding back the surge of nature—and unjust, penalizing acts for which we are not responsible, since we are not free. The role of laws is to make all men as contented as possible, yet in punishing a supposed crime it pleases only the victim, not the perpetrator. In this sense law really is indifferent, since all it does is displace evil.

Law claims to be universal, unconditional; valid everywhere, for everyone, at all times. Sade deploys a pincer movement against such pretensions. Firstly, the extreme variability of laws proves, on the contrary, their artificial and contingent character; Sade reiterates at some length Pascal's remarks on legal relativity. But if they were unconditional and universal, they would in any case be unjust, in applying the same rule to different people. For this reason, a law uniformly applied within any one country is already iniquitous in its denial of human difference. Law is incoherent: it punishes insignificant acts harshly, whilst overlooking those with far graver consequences. It is supposed to serve the good of society and should therefore turn a blind eye to opinions and vices that do no harm to the state; yet it does the opposite—condemning murder, for example, while at the same time applauding war.

Law is blind to the true nature of the acts it penalizes, whose ultimate results will only be unveiled in the future. In a tale called 'Seide', inspired by Voltaire's *Zadig*, Sade presents a whole series of episodes in which supposed crimes are finally discovered to be beneficial or even providential. Yet no amount of progress will lessen the opacity of the future. Here we see another form of the discord between the temporalities of law and social life, which Montesquieu had already noted. Finally, law has harmful consequences—especially in the penalties it inflicts. The remedy here is worse than the disease: instead of improving the convicted, these punishments humiliate, brutalize and embitter them, leading to revolt. Only public opinion can be entrusted with the right to chastise.

²¹ *Juliette*, Book I, p. 175.

The impersonal character of the law—often invoked in its favour, as a means of emancipation from the tutelage of arbitrary and capricious monarchs or tyrants—is subjected to a further pincer move. If the law really were impartial, claims Sade, ‘I would prefer to be oppressed by a neighbour whom I can oppress in my turn than by the law, before which I am powerless’.²² In reality, any judicial system is objective in appearance only. It reflects the personal interests and prejudices of the lawmakers in its very conception; while its application—due, precisely, to its general character—demands the interpretation of a judge, who can use it to indulge his own passions. It is the personal nature of the law that reveals it, finally, as tyranny, all the more formidable for being masked. Far from being a defence against despotism, as Montesquieu believed, law is often its best accomplice: ‘there is no tyrant that has not been supported by the law in the exercise of his cruelties . . . tyrants are never born in anarchy; they rise only in the shadow of laws, claiming authority from them’.²³ The height of despotism is the death penalty, in which all the vices of the law converge. Capital punishment is unjust: it punishes those who are not responsible for their deeds. It is ineffective: it has never prevented crime. It is absurd: one wrong does not right another. Finally, there are no extenuating circumstances: a man or woman who kills may be excused in the name of egoism or passion; but legal murder is committed in cold blood, in the interests of that spectre, society. It is therefore the only real crime.

In sum, Sade declares, it is the law that makes the crime—or, more precisely, ‘it is the multiplication of laws which begets that of crimes’, as acts that are perfectly innocent in themselves are declared criminal; and, by throwing up so many barriers and constraints, the law inflames the urge to smash them.²⁴ The best method of reducing crime is thus to reduce the number, scope and severity of laws. We need, as Zamé says in *Aline and Valcour*, ‘laws so gentle and small in number that all men, of whatever disposition, can easily submit to them’. A regime without law is either despotism or anarchy. Many of Sade’s great libertine characters—Vermeuil, Saint Fond—compose stirring eulogies to tyranny. Yet the reforming Sade of *Aline and Valcour* and *Once More, My Countrymen*, leans more towards anarchy. He stresses life and energy, while the rule of law signifies only lethargy—as can be seen every time a state suspends the law in order to regenerate itself. The virtues of

²² *Juliette*, Book IV, p. 732 ²³ *Juliette*, Book IV, p. 733. ²⁴ *Juliette*, Book IV, p. 734.

anarchy are seen most clearly in republican governments that must live in a permanent state of insurrection. But above all, only anarchy permits Sade's great ethical doctrines to be put into practice: unconditional sovereignty of the individual; absolute liberty for oneself; boundless tolerance for others; in case of conflict, the right and duty to make one's own justice, without hindrance to that of others.

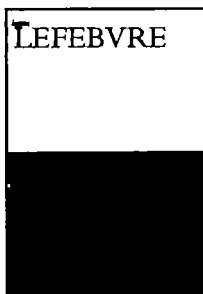
Machiavelli and Pascal contest the divine or natural foundations of the law; Montesquieu and Sade its aptness as a tool for the government of man. As a result, they all enlarge the space reserved for politics. Two points seem worth remarking. On the one hand, the four writers, each starting from very different concerns and principles, arrive at largely convergent criticisms of law. Following the tracks of the sceptic Machiavelli and the devout Pascal, the enlightened magistrate Montesquieu and the imprisoned libertine Sade, we have traced a series of encounters. On the other hand, such compatible critiques can lead to the most varied—indeed, opposed—political standpoints. For Machiavelli, the most elevated form of politics is the glorious and perilous adventure of founding a state. Pascal sides with his 'adepts', who profess a sort of political quietism. Montesquieu's themes will be taken up in Burke, while Sade is in many respects a precursor of Stirner. The critique of law is thus a politically indeterminate project, a curious crossroads where, for an instant, the most diverse, even contrary thinkers can meet. The lessons to be drawn for an era such as ours, where the rule of law is universally acclaimed, demand further discussion.

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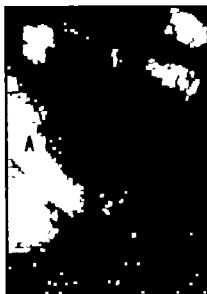
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IN THE LAND OF *ELEFANTE*

IF THE LYRIC MODE classically inscribes the poet as individual, the Brazilian writer Francisco Alvim is, in Cacaso's nice phrase, 'the poet of the others': finding his own voice by ceding the right to speak to all the rest—to the extent of transforming this attentiveness towards them into a new poetic technique. There is, of course, an element of irony in this depiction of the writer as good Samaritan: such close concern for one's neighbours can also be, as Cacaso himself insists, a literary device for catching them *in flagrante*. For the 'others' here are not the abstract figures of philosophical discourse. We should think rather of the 'Brazilians just like me' of whom Mário de Andrade wrote in the 1920s; his eponymous hero Macunaíma also the 'little heart of the others'. Or of the atmosphere, saturated with familiarity, to which Carlos Drummond referred with cordial ambivalence when he wrote in 1930: 'at least we know everyone's rubbish around here'.¹

In other words, three quarters of a century after the modernist movement began in Brazil, the investigations carried out by its leading figures into the peculiarities of national life—its speech, its rhythms, the interactions of its people and their unspoken pacts—re-emerge in Alvim's new book, *Elefante*. Quite a few things have changed since the twenties, and the poet's historical and aesthetic sense for these shifts is one of his fine qualities. The essence of his approach can be conveyed in four words:

Want to see?

Listen²

This is the work's poetic; more complex than it seems, once its shifting grammatical coloration taken into account. The ill-disciplined slippage

(a very Brazilian habit) between third and second-person modes of address, from the polite *Quer?* to the more intimate *Escuta*; the informality of treatment; the Oswaldian modernism, its brevity not without a glint of humour—all jar with the universalist tone of the maxim. In fact, without the colloquialism and grammatical licence, this would be an impersonal, lapidary lesson about the relation between desire, vision and the spoken word. But the poem is not timeless in this sense: the social and cultural particularities of its intonations pull it towards a specific world setting, just as they destabilize its meanings. The poem's equivocal placing within the collection also needs to be taken into account. It can be read either as the last of a series of verses dominated by lyrical feeling, or as the first of another set, marked by a critical-realist note and a shrewd sense of specifically Brazilian absurdities. Fitted between these two, the 'Want to see?' of the title-question could as easily be an invitation to poetry, or the mocking humour of someone well acquainted with the beast of which he speaks—and in whose belly he belongs. The same words might, on one reading, be those of any intelligent person who recommends the humility of listening; of a poet, learned and concise; or again, of an unillusioned Brazilian, advising his interlocutor on what to expect. Importantly, this three-in-one is sustained within everyday speech, with no sense of the interiorized conflict of the Romantic ego, or of exceptional beings or situations. Its context is the complexity, the peculiarity of Brazil's daily life—and here, I think, lies the secret of the work. Its language and contexts are rigorously commonplace, but they pertain to a specific social formation that is itself at odds with the conventions of contemporary civilization.

The book's consistency of tone lies in its dramatization—through the multiple freedoms modernism establishes—of a central, enduring concept: that of Brazilian interrelations between norms and informality; a heterodoxy that can be seen either as a manufacturing defect or a gift from the gods. Much has been written on the theme of informality; the point here is that its systematic transposition into the structure of these

¹ Francisco Alvim, *Elefante*, São Paulo: Companhia das Letras 2000. For Cacaso—a leading member of the anti-dictatorial 'marginal poetry' movement in Brazil in the 1970s—see 'O poeta dos outros', in *Não quero prosa*, Campinas 1997, p. 308. For Mário de Andrade (1893–1945): see, respectively, 'Dois poemas acreanos', in *Clá do jaboti*, and *Macunaíma. the Hero without a Character* (1928). For Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902–1987): 'Explicação', in *Alguma poesia*, 1930.

² *Quer ver?* // *Escuta*

poems forms the watermark of Alvim's book.³ The dissonances corresponding to this mismatch can be detected in every aspect of national life. They can be collected as anecdotes that encode a historical condition; reduced to diagrams or modules with variabilized powers of explanation; or invented, constructed so as to explore the extremities of the concept. Alvim, who has a devilish ear for these things, has done some of all three. The variety of which he is capable runs from the apparently innocent—

Argument

But they all do⁴

—to almost imperceptible touches that are not easy to pin down as instances of informality, yet which nevertheless bring the notion to life. Thus, for example, the elaborate constructions of a French functionary, highly articulate if somewhat ridiculous, throw into relief the stumbling steps of a local civil servant on the opposite page:

I wanted to propose something along those lines
but then I thought
but oh my god
then he said⁵

In analogous fashion, the clarity and integrity at work in Spanish expressions is set in contrast to the slipperiness, or lack of finish, of local diction. Both are ways of configuring the external face of a specifically Brazilian literary existence through its contrasts with the tones and languages of other nations.

In a remarkable poem, 'Open', about the gaze as it wanders through the field of light—a plausible subject for philosophy—the movement is introduced by 'At times', which instantly de-universalizes it. This is followed by an assortment of passing colloquialisms that render the

³ The classic systematization is in Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's *Raízes do Brasil* [The Roots of Brazil]. For literature, see Antonio Cândido, 'Dialectic of Malandrosism', in *On Literature and Society*, tr. Howard Becker, Princeton 1995, pp. 79–103.

⁴ *Argumento* // Mas se todos fazem

⁵ *Debate* // eu quis colocar esse tipo de coisa / mas então pensei / mas meu deus do céu / aí ele disse

encounters with 'time' and 'eternity', which 'is not far', more like meeting with acquaintances on a streetcorner, somewhere everyone stops, with no particular destination in mind, simply asking, '—place?'. In other words, there is an inflection towards the specific, to a situation beyond the anthropomorphism, that softens the rigorous abstraction. In the opening poem, 'Carnival', the paradoxical, devaluing transfiguration of water into desert might simply be explained by the protagonist's hangover, as he sits watching the sea with a thirst no water can slake; which—once this premise has been guessed at—raises a smile at the final question: what is the reality of poetry? In 'Commentary'—where one does not know who is who and the phrases do not fit together—the secret of the discontinuity lies in fear, in the voids that install themselves in people's heads when they talk about the military dictatorship.

Not all these dissonances seem, at first glance, to resonate with the structural malformations of the country; it is in reading the work as a whole that a wider set of references begins to assert itself, giving the poems—the briefest, in particular—a broader field of allusion to which the reader gradually grows attuned. Thus, in:

Football

There are balls that he doesn't go after⁶

the wisdom, or complaint, applies not only to the player but to all those obliged to exercise a certain caution: the politician, the head of the family, the drug-trafficker; women too, as the case may be. The subject may be sport, but no clear border separates the zone of risk that the player might run into from the terror deployed—in the past and in other pages of the book—by the Brazilian military regime. The discovery lies in the relationship between the fears, between the decisions of how to play them.

Text and world

Once polarized by the same forces as the social totality, the poems can deploy new possibilities of allusion, equivalence and ellipsis that permit them an even greater degree of concision, to the point where humour ceases to be an objective. But if the wit at play within each poem is

⁶ *Futebol* // Tem bola em que ele não vai

restricted to the absolute minimum appropriate to a form that is still akin to the *trouville*, or joke, the contrary is true of the space glimpsed beyond the frontiers of the text, which open directly onto historical reality. But are we dealing just with 'texts', when ellipsis plays so great a part? Rarefaction and raw experience are conjoined here, though their objects are dispersed. This is a poetry of summary indications, a join-up-the-dots: cerebral, hypothetical, now realist, now allegorical—like the 'Itineraries. Itineraries. Itineraries. Itineraries. Itineraries. Itineraries.' recommended in the 'Cannibal Manifesto'.⁷

In these poems—there are around a hundred of them here, in a collection of 128—the appropriate reading is frankly activist, as free, informed and observant as possible, to complement the extreme ellipticism practised by the poet. It is for the reader, alert to indications of every sort, to imagine the situations in which the spoken words arise, to grasp how sharply one-sided they are and thus to enter into the material, putting the poems' perspectives into perspective—often ending by turning the original phrase, the starting-point, inside out. Each poem, even when it is composed solely of a title and a single line, can be seen as an episode, a co-ordinate, within the life of the whole. In this sense, while on one plane the poet takes compression to the absolute limit, he compensates on another by offering the full breadth of the social-historical world, represented without resort to any of the continuities of plot and character or the epic and dramatic frameworks offered by literary tradition. The outdated or illusory aspects of individualism—and their crisis in nineteenth-century literature—are rendered explicit in the miniaturization of these 'poem-drafts': sexual jealousy, social resentment, class guilt, family feuds, fear of contagion, delusions of grandeur, the urge to pull a fast one, are all present here, utterly reduced, yet without any loss of proportion or subtlety. In other words, *Elefante* belongs to that special category of works in which the reciprocal verification between artistic forms and historical experience is being worked through.

The poems group themselves together in a series of unexpected ways—through simple contrasts, scathing mutual commentary or more distant interreaction.

⁷ 'Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros.': Oswald de Andrade, 'Manifesto antropófago', *Do Pau-Brasil à antropofagia e às utopias*, Rio de Janeiro 1978, p. 15.

Park

It's nice
but it's very mixed⁸

gives expression to a typical middle or upper-class opinion: in favour of social improvements but hostile to popular participation—a key variant of the national form of progressivism, still bound to its colonial origins. The implication, of course, is that an 'unmixed' park would not admit the miscellaneous mass of the poor, black and white, unless they were employed in some sort of service role: child-minder, park-keeper, taking old people or dogs for a walk. The antiquated expression *misturado*, predating the media's pseudo-integrated Brazil, may bring a smile; but anti-poor sentiments have not disappeared and continue, with the necessary adjustments, to fortify the faultlines of Brazilian society. Out of context, the vignette could be read as nostalgia; documentary; pro-oligarchy or against it. One of Alvim's sure hits—and one of his originalities—is the way in which he integrates such a moment into the present crisis:

Look

A black man speaking
with such clarity
and human sympathy⁹

In contrast to 'Park', this apparently records a victory over bigotry, but is itself so prejudiced as to make one balk. The critical impact is subtler, and more devastating, when we realize that even such an appreciation of clear, sympathetic speech—objectively, an enlightened response, entraining a genuine recognition of the other and with it, the possibility of his or her emancipation—has ceased now to carry any weight; so that this moment of deepest prejudice currently appears to be a lost opportunity for moving beyond it. In

But

she's quite clean¹⁰

⁸ *Parque* // É bom / mas é muito misturado

⁹ *Olha* // Um preto falando / com toda clareza / e simpatia humana

¹⁰ *Mas* // é limpinha

the content of the poem consists in what it does not say, all that precedes the title: the encyclopaedia of objections that those with property raise against those without it, those obliged to labour for them—of whom the best that can be said is that they are not very dirty. The term loses nothing (a friend has pointed out) if the context is shifted from the drawing-room to the red-light district. Again, in

Disposable

feel like throwing me away¹¹

we do not know if the wish is the speaker's, or someone else's; perhaps both. In either case, we find an internalization of the same class attitudes.

Time has passed between the earlier 'very mixed' and this 'disposable'. One was born with the end of slavery, while the other belongs to the age of mass consumer society. Nevertheless, the class formations to which the two refer have remained almost constant: on one side, the distinguished and enlightened, the 'civilized' who give the orders; on the other, the multitude of the rightless. The reciprocal conditioning of the two sides, within the para-legal terms of authority and informality, is a central, enduring nexus of Brazil's historical experience. Alvim's ear for the variations within this equation allows him to bring together, in sure, surprising ways, spheres that never usually meet: anecdotes from Minas and the rural hinterland; gossip from the time of the dictatorship; drug deals; houseproud mothers, working the streets; casual labour abroad; a car crash caused by jealous rage; the stresses of bureaucratic life; politics and corruption; the guilt-ridden sparring of marital break-ups; she-loves-me, she-loves-me-not—all share some undercurrent of the *not right*, which this work aims to know. In the great tradition of Machado de Assis, the poet is aware of the internal connexions between the opposite poles of Brazilian society, and refuses their stereotypical obsessions.¹² Those without rights are capable of a special kind of courtesy, as well as the truculence learnt from those above; while the civilized resort quite naturally to the double-dealing ways of small-time crooks, without imagining that these could impinge on their lofty moments of love, reflection or barbarity.

¹¹ *Descartável* // vontade de me jogar fora

¹² See Roberto Schwarz, *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism: Machado de Assis*, Durham, NC 2001.

In describing Alvim as the 'poet of the others', Cacaso wanted to stress the non-bourgeois generosity of the impulse that takes an educated artist across the barrier that separates the approved from the rejected or despised, to seek the awareness expressed in words and situations there. Alvim himself, as a writer, certainly breathes an exceptional aura of humanity that derives from this approach. But such a stance in itself does not abolish social divisions; indeed, far from erasing them, the effect of the poet's attentive sympathy is rather to expose these fractures. There are, perhaps, no other works in Brazilian poetry in which the brutal subtleties of class have such presence. Ironically, by lending his voice to others, this disinterested, brotherly artist gives free rein to all the species of degradations produced by this system of conflicting interests. In 'Tradesman, manicurist, decorator', for example—the gestures of suburban melodrama already played out in the title—more or less tolerable ways of earning a living get ranked to produce a result somewhere between the democratic and the seigneurial-sardonic. In a darker tone, but still linked to the discoveries of listening, there are the rumours connecting land deals, the presidential succession and the torture of political prisoners—hinted at in passing, the sentences interrupted—of 'Commentary'. Alvim looks for poetry, and for his country, in unwonted places, normally frequented only by the tabloid press or those at home in squalor.

Work of generations

The voices that speak through the poet are not those of anyone in particular, but nor do they belong to everyone. Anonymous yet typical, neither individualized nor universalized, their utterances have the polyvalence of everyday use combined with a structural fit into the collective processes of Brazilian life that conveys its patterns and enacts its saliences. The poet ensures that we often do not know who is speaking, whom they are addressing, whose viewpoint provides the title—itsself no neutral frame, but a player within the overall field of uncertainties. This precise yet undetermined structure, demanding a set of diverse readings, allows systemic inequalities to speak for themselves—their asymmetries functioning as an immense, automatic subject, shaping destinies and teaching us how small we are before it. Is the point of view so-and-so's, or someone else's? The words might serve for either, but the effect is completely different when the roles are reversed. Is Cristiano the one who recalls the car crash, the idiotic slamming on of brakes that

causes it, or is it—with a slight change of intonation in the last line—Darlene? We know nothing of them save their names and the social differences these suggest—a refined young man; a young woman who sounds like an actress—which may not correspond with reality; may be no more than prejudice. We are given no more objective evidence than this possibly non-existent opposition, of no importance in itself, but in which the internalization of social power structures becomes tangible.

Alvim's poems contain a special sort of evidence, from which the writer—in keeping with one of the radical promises of the avant-garde—has practically disappeared. The material itself, pre-forged within daily life, is crucial to this achievement, as is the expository technique, the pared-down, interrogative form learned from Oswald. Underpinning these, and informing both the scope and accuracy of the project, lies a profound critical understanding of Brazilian social relations, their covert correspondences and deviations from modern norms viewed as if from a distance, yet always as 'ours'. This is an aesthetic approach that refuses to individualize either the poems' characters or the poet's *persona*, for Alvim—with certain exceptions, as we shall see—does not write from the basis of a personal mythology. The complexity he seeks lies in the public domain, accessible to all, as the radical modernist João Cabral had hoped, in contrast to the musty attics of private life. The same refusal is at work at the level of language, whose basic unit is not the line of verse or written word but the spoken phrase, culled from the lived relations of 'a problem country'. The consequences of this—apparently anti-lyrical—engagement with second-hand experience as a point of departure are decisive.

Alvim's last collection, *O corpo fora*, took Baudelaire's famous phrase from '*Fusées*' as its epigraph: 'Immense profundity of thought in commonplace turns of phrase, holes burrowed by generations of ants'.³ What is expressed in everyday speech is an actual social system at work, through which—thanks to the invention of this literary architecture—we can recognize and examine ourselves, for better or for worse. In part, the hard currency of this sort of talk is extrinsic to the artistic process, impossible to improve upon. The product of collective use, often popular or semi-popular, it has a tried-and-tested quality quite different to that of individual creations. To note these intricacies is always to do

³ Francisco Alvim, *Poesias reunidas*, São Paulo 1988, p. 9.

more than merely understand the poet. Modern poetry's desire 'to be' rather than 'to communicate' finds an unforeseen realization here. As immediate responses to contemporary social situations, these utterances just are, with the simplicity of behaviour sanctioned by practice. They have a dense, objective existence that challenges the reader from an unexpected direction; their contingency dependent on other factors than poetic whim. Not that the poet's ear has been limited to passive recording. These phrases have been finely tuned, scoured clean of superfluity, redundancy, cliché or generalizations: in other words, of conventional literary features. His work is to distil their experiential content and render them commensurable, as parts of the same system. The process is not dictated by poetic tradition but by a sense for the most effective means of representing this regime of generalized social ambiguity, through what he describes as the

irony
of polymorphous voices
sibylline
unsettled in the ear
of language⁴

The line divisions—into something other than verses—also serve to expose and confuse the logic of the action, to make it polycentric. Something similar occurs with punctuation, where the organizing role given to capital letters dispenses with the need for full stops; the opportunities for confusion that this creates are, again, fully exploited.

Relative perspectives

The work's most striking technical move—borrowed from modernist fiction—is the discontinuity of perspectives within the poems, which lack any stable point, even in their titles. These changes are effected with astonishing dexterity. Although tiny, the field for manoeuvre is regulated by the largest social forces, so that the inversions of viewpoint acquire a didactic dimension, providing distances and revelations. There is something Brechtian here, though without Brecht's political certainties. The minimalism, inspired by attitude and gesture as well as social

⁴ *Escolho* // ironia / das polimorfias vozes / sibilinas / transtornadas no ouvido / da língua

and historical insight, also has a demonstrative aim, parallel to Brecht's. We have to hear to see. The paring down of speech, scenes, sequences and digressions, far from impoverishing the poems, gives greater force to the play of connexions, while the proliferation of virtual relationships within these miniatures intensifies the logic of the situations. The aim here is quite overt and provides a set of tasks for literary investigation far removed from the art-for-art's-sake approach of much experimentalism. The economy of minimal forms results in an almost modular reduction and an extreme concentration of the social relations within them—thereby gaining a force to which the brevity of the formulations should not blind us:

She

Hit her

Hit¹⁵

Depending on who is speaking, and who listening, 'she' is ordering someone to be hit, or is being hit herself—unless the poet is getting orders from the woman. Or is it he who is demanding she be hit? The precarious grammar—taken as an indicator of class—could explain the vehemence of the request, but the opposite is also possible: revealing that the tenuous commitment to grammatical correctness on the part of our educated elite can be shaken at the first jolt.¹⁶ In sum, the systematic changes of focus work in tandem with the social investigation and serve it as a means of analysis and exploration, in close contact with the actual material relations.

You think I'm stupid

You're the boss

and you let him act the way he does?

He'd better pay

what he owes you¹⁷

¹⁵ *Ela* // *Soca ela* / *Soca*. On its own, *ela* can mean both 'she' and 'her'.

¹⁶ An attentive observer lists the 'colonial linguistic regime' among the general conditions of Brazilian literature. Reflection on the aesthetic and class consequences of this regime, which did not disappear with decolonization, has hardly begun. Luciana Stegagno Picchio, *La letteratura brasiliana*, Florence 1972, pp. 27–28.

¹⁷ *E eu é que sou burro* // *Você é o dono / e deixa fazer o que ele faz? / O que ele te deve / vai ter que pagar*

Here, too, the voice that speaks in the body of the poem might not be the same one as in the title; which in turn could be either introduction or conclusion. The provocateur—a woman? a hanger-on?—is in the right, from the money point of view. The listener, well aware that reason and legal right offer no guarantee in this instance—but what are the other powers in play?—has the bitter satisfaction, linked to the presence of third parties, of giving a title to this scene, getting the last word but without changing its essential parameters. Action and joke come in the dialogue, but the substance to be deciphered lies in the relations of power in the background, which are neither named, nor even touched, by its sarcasm. If the title comes before the poem, not after, and is thought by the person who speaks the text, another, less interesting, reading is possible.

Connivance and accommodation

Given the current Concretist–Cabralist conjuncture within Brazilian poetry, it is worth noting how Alvim, at the formal level, takes his own path. He too is looking for the gains to be had from reduction and combination, but without paying tribute to asceticism and geometry, and above all without abandoning the world. Again, as in Brecht, a high degree of subtlety combines with a type of robust reflection that we do not normally recognize as a literary category. With no loss to the multiplicity of perspectives, there is a preference here for the lively, unaffected use of language, a stress on pragmatic fluidity and accuracy of vision: this is an avant-garde aesthetic opposed to deference, displays of authority and the grand abstractions of the bourgeois social order, to whose rigidity and falseness, here and now, it objects. It is a refusal that has its sights set on the posturings and façades of both individual and institutional dignity.

So get off your high horse
and say what you really think!¹⁸

This is another point of contact with Brazilian ‘informality’, which relativizes everything, even the law; with the permanent, personalized game of accommodation to power that permits the breaching of all formal rules and with them—when taken to the limit—the state’s guarantee

¹⁸ *Em família* // Então bota de lado essa cerimônia / e diga logo o que você pensa

of rights. The dizzying revaluations involved in these movements, in which the illicit goes unpunished and critical reaction and regression are confused, is a feature of many of the greatest moments in Brazilian literature.¹⁹ There is a possible affinity between situations in which bourgeois categories only half hold sway, and the deconventionalizing tendency of modern art: one that is problematic in every sense.

In this light, we can look at the various deals made in Alvim's work, none of them within the law:

Business

We'll sort it out later²⁰

Once this stance—expressed aesthetically in the tone of this ubiquitous refrain—has been taken, bourgeois legality is out of the question. The economic transaction, when it happens, will not be encoded in a contract, create any formal equivalence between the subjects or provide any self-standing guarantees. In other words, the imbalance of power between the parties will not be suspended by the egalitarian fictions of the law. Legal rights must always take other incidental factors into account, making each case *sui generis*. When a sense of human sympathy makes itself felt it does not come from respect for norms, but from informal gestures that infringe the rules, and seem to constitute a community inseparable from some kind of connivance. 'Business' acquires its full weight when read in conjunction with the poems already quoted—'Go on, get off your high horse / and say what you really think', 'There are balls that he doesn't go after', 'But they all do' and others—which allow the reader to sense their common framework, and give a different form to the whole; one in which the rule of force always plays a role.

Saddles

I tried it
He didn't resist²¹

¹⁹ See Antonio Cândido, 'Dialectic of Malandroism', pp. 97–103.

²⁰ *Negócio* // Depois a gente acerta

²¹ *Selas* // Experimental / Não reagiu

The language is equestrian, the audience a family member or similar, and the probable victim is a menial or a relative, in no position to object.

Peripheral conditions

The subject matter raises another set of questions. Is this the poet's preferred choice of theme? Is it an involuntary diagnosis, the result of his effort to be mimetically precise and faithful to the language as spoken? Let us say that the rule of not abiding by the rules is a paradox that condenses the moral and intellectual condition of a peripheral country, where today's canonical forms, those of the countries at the centre, cannot be put into practice in their entirety, which does not stop them being obligatory as mirror and yardstick. Clearly, there is a negative sign, a deficiency, inherent in this condition—complemented by the positive sign of the other, situated in different latitudes. The problem country may be presented as a form of exoticism; at its most serious, as an excrescence. But at another level, the logic of the situation produces not only an inferiority complex but a mutual contempt. From the Brazilian viewpoint, the rule of law can look questionable and outlandish, if not hypocritical and domineering, with its lack of spontaneity, lamentable impersonality, unreal abstraction, ridiculous presumption and so on. These clashing views, each with enough reason on their side to undermine the other, open up critical perspectives:

Hospitality

If your country's
that great
why don't you go home?²²

Underlined by the clear irony of the title, we witness the resentful rudeness of the hosts, citizens of a rich country, who cannot forgive the homesick immigrant and demand his social conformity as well as his labour. Central to the poem but left to the reader's imagination are the marvels that the poor devil has extolled in relaxed, informal Brazil, the country that he has fled from and to which he has no desire to return. If, on the contrary, the speaker is Brazilian, the sense of the words changes, but not the co-ordinates within which they operate. The poem highlights

²² *Hospitalidade* // Se seu país é assim — / tão bom — / por que não volta?

the complementarity of the resentments or alienations in the peripheral and core countries, the joint system they create and the truths they tell about each other.

There are no good grounds for recommending informality: its foundations lie in social fracture, in the precarious integration of the poor and their lack of rights—which does not stop them taking advantage of informal practices for their own ends. But with this basic proviso, there is no reason to ignore the freedoms and polemical scope inherent in this quasi-state of nature, especially in comparison to the stiffness and artificiality of the bourgeois regulation of life. Alert to both aspects, and independent enough not to close his eyes to either of them, Alvim has much to teach in this respect. His de-idealized and debased world, structurally second class, nevertheless breathes a peculiar kind of poetry, linked to the advantages of naturalness that follow the relativization of law and the suspension of the sacrifices necessary to sustain the 'formal' brand of superiority. Yet how are we to assess the force of such despised, outcast material?

Let me tell you

A little pest of a pain
It starts I lose my stride
Hurts here and hurts there
Silly nuisance²³

The discomfort—it has no scientific name, evinces no remedy from the pharmaceutical industry—clearly falls on the peripheral side of the equation. There is no way to get rid of the pain, which does not kill and has no clear cure, but does not for that reason cease to exist. This does not make it more 'natural' than pneumonia, say, which can be treated with antibiotics and figures in medical statistics; but it connects to other inescapable aspects of life that science and medicine have not been able to reach yet, or which they relegate without comment to a secondary order or sweep under the carpet. From this point of view, the arbitrary, capricious little pain is a radical presence, representing an unavoidable memory, a backhanded victory over modern presumption.

²³ *Tê contar // Dorzinha enjoada / Ela começa perco a graça / Dói aí e dói aqui / Dorzinha chata*

That said, the pain's 'naturalness' is ambiguous, drawing now from nature itself, now from an out-of-joint social order; above all from the interchange between the two. The intimate relationship between the sufferer and the pain; its personification; the diminutives and irritated adjectives applied; the anecdotal form; the colloquial grumble of the title and the unceremonious way the pain comes and goes and changes place—all are thoroughly familiar. The pain and its victim conform to the ideal pattern of Brazilian informality, pressuring and being pressured, seeking some ad hoc compromise on the margins of medical progress. This in turn domesticates the unavoidable meeting-place between human creature and physical suffering, giving it the stamp of naturalness and with it, a certain metaphysical dignity, despite the fact that the object itself hardly exists. The conversation is inconsequential, but its horizon is the way things are, the inexorable flow of time and the *terra incognita* ahead of us: truths that are taboo in modern life and which subtly come to seem like forms of knowledge proper to Brazil. In

And now?

We were there yesterday
He's much cheerier
He's had a lot of pain²⁴

the perplexity of the title comes after the relief which, contrary to what one might expect, has only worsened (or prolonged?) the problem. The outstanding quality of a poem so devoid of emphasis, so far advanced in its avoidance of any kind of conventionality, can be hard to grasp. The almost spatial simplicity of the positioning of the terms of the impasse, each one temporally specific, is a striking moment of materialist awareness.

Assimilated into the world of informality, with which it shares its diminished status, this complaint acquires a national coloration. As the title 'And now?' informs us, this is a case of patience being put to the test. The sense of physical existence reflects a form of sociability: the pain that there is no way of getting away from takes on the features of a person one knows, a member of the extended family. But the same theme can also recur in an explicitly social version:

²⁴ *Fagora?* // Ontem estivemos lá / Está mais animado / Teve muita dor

Irani, tell Gilson to make off

I told him to
but he won't²⁵

This drama presupposes property, but in a precarious (antiquated?) version, not independent of the rule of force. The girl with the indigenous name—she could be a daughter, a poor relation, an employee or a dependent—gives the command as a sign of obedience. As for Gilson, there is no way of knowing why he disobeys. It might be cousin-love, the dog-like faithfulness of an employee or a tenant, or the despair of someone with nowhere to go. His insubordination is silent but obstinate and disarming. The inconvenience of this refusal to move, from a bourgeois perspective, is obvious; its logic imposes a different parameter on freedom, so long as the forces in play are not too unequal, and paternalism does not swap its amiable face for that of the unrestricted modern property owner.

In the intimate struggle with the ailment in 'Let me tell you', a give and take with no fixed rules, the sufferer brings to bear all his resources of will, patience, adaptability, humour, at a certain comforting distance from universalized forms of right and wrong. There is a parallel with Gilson, who doesn't want to go, or with the business deal which 'we'll sort it out later', or again, in domestic warfare: 'The more you say it / the more I'll do it'.²⁶ It is as if, below the equator of law, science, grammar, progress and all the other modern imperatives, there opens up another civilization, more malleable and less abstract, governed by relationships between people (which include the arbitrary use of power and force). Its anachronistic satisfactions seem to be lacking in the life spent within the constraints of reified civil norms. This non-official, non-model civilization, somewhat disgraceful but with a utopian potential in its contrasts, is the non-bourgeois dimension of the reproduction of bourgeois society in Brazil: inferior but necessary, with its own wisdom and even, for some, a superiority. Its multiple aspects, from the sympathetic to the horrendous, are the substance and problem that Brazilian historical experience has to offer.

²⁵ *Irani, manda Gilson embora // Eu mando / mas ele não vai*

²⁶ *Briga // Quanto mais você fala / mais eu faço*

Informality changes aspect depending on whether it is in the service of one class or another. When it helps people find their way through the privations of a post-colonial poverty that provides neither civil rights nor paid work but is sanctified by the preposterous formalisms of law, it has a popular connotation, even in its way a civilizing role. Its sharp eye for the damage caused by bourgeois abstractions is an element of humanity and reason, linked sometimes to a certain unmistakable charm in Brazilian speech, behaviour and literature. Thus, for instance, the case of a cunning Portuguese ex-market stallholder, who 'brought up a niece / who gave him grandchildren'.²⁷ But it also often works as an ideological alibi for those on top, allowing them to feel easier about riding roughshod over those below. In tune with the times, the stress of Alvim's book lies on this second form.

Factotum

Nothing worse
than owing someone a favour
Look Virgílio
you don't owe me a thing
only your leg and²⁸

The opening words underline the humiliation of debt, sufficient to sour one's whole existence. In reply, whether to ease the situation or aggravate it, the boss tells his dependent that he owes him nothing—just 'your leg and'. What is not said—and the sordid taste this brings—is left to the imagination of the reader, who can choose between the disgraces specific to this universe (but avoidable by intervention above): jail, mutilation, death, a dishonoured daughter and much more. The note of perverse paternalism is stronger still in the iniquitous calculation, reeking of the plantation store, that imposes itself when we think about the title. After a lifetime of service, the factotum is still indebted while his protector owes him nothing, much less any sense of obligation. It is a version of the double bind between dependents and property owners, in which the dependents' debt lies not in money but in unending personal obligation, whereas that of the owners is a question of convenience and calculation. Moving between two worlds, they can come and go at their leisure, swapping the roles of faithful protector and objective, carefree

²⁷ *Vizinho* // criou uma sobrinha / que lhe deu netos.

²⁸ *Factótum* // Pior coisa / é dever um favor a alguém / Olha Virgílio / a mim você não deve nada não / só sua perna e

individual. In both cases, informality gives to those on top the impress of a pleasant civility, disguising the social chasm.

Unspoken zones

There is another variant of this theme in the poems linked to Brasília, power, the time of the dictatorship and of fear. Here the dimensions of bureaucracy and state expand the malign side of informality, producing the paradox of an anonymous personalization while reducing the country to an underworld. Stripping off its old rural and patriarchal disguise, informality now oppresses everyone, even its beneficiaries.

Archive

it can't be for memories²⁹

Why not? The backdrop here is the political police, who make the very concept of an archive frightening, and the notion of memory futile. The phrase could be the black humour of a potential victim or the words of a torture expert.

Jangle

Sometimes there's news
of a less agreeable sort
and your ears jangle³⁰

What news? As in 'Factotum' and 'But', what is left silent is the most important part. The jittery speaker does not dare go into it but sticks to euphemisms and limits his political commentary to his nervous reflexes, assimilated to the irritation caused by an ill-tuned radio. In 'Shadow',

that black edifice
in the yellow shadow, immense
astounds the whole city

Not you³¹

²⁹ *Arquivo* // não pode ser de lembranças

³⁰ *Chiado* // Às vezes corre notícia / dessas menos agradáveis / e o ouvido chia

³¹ *Sombra* // Aquele edifício negro / na sombra amarela, imensa / assombra toda a cidade // A ti, não

With terrible deliberation, the speaker, or poet, is excluded from the ranks of the frightened, thus levelling at himself the grave accusation of being one of those who know (but know what?) and, for the same reason, owe. This is the current stage of evolution of the dependency, above all of the educated, upon power. Once again, all reference to social terror lies in silence. In sum, these are figures from a constellation that is both familiar and enigmatic, in which the pores of the state are intimately associated with the trade-offs of paternalism, marital rows, corrupt business deals, the habits of disease, liberties with the law, grammatical carelessness.

Selection and montage

If they are harder to pin down, the qualities of the collection considered as a whole are at least as substantial as those of the individual poems in *Elefante*. Some of these features are intentional constructions; others, unplanned by-products of the work, can be equally suggestive. Alvim is a master not only of reductions and shifting configurations but also of selection, which here plays a structural role similar to the choice of episodes in a realist novel. The process seems to go something like this. After panning for suggestive trivia and reducing these to their active nuclei, the poet will select a few, create a vacuum around them and leave them alone on the page, in order to note how they interreact with each other and what insights and correspondences they generate. The point of departure is arbitrary and contingent, but the procedure is disciplined by the systematic objective of putting one's ear to the country.

The sequence of the poems is plotted with the purposeful precision of *montage*, though it also draws on the skills of the stage-director, pamphleteer and social analyst. The surprising thing is that these operations—their critical, demonstrative spirit much closer to thought than to spoken language—manage to succeed in this long-distance harmonization of the words without distorting their natural qualities. It takes an ear closely attuned to a certain tone to resolve the discord between current speech and constructivist limpidity, receptive passivity and conceptual energy, the immediate 'given' and the allegorical device. The reductions of modernism play a role here, too, as does its radicalism—though this is now a second-half version: not the explosive project for a more transparent, habitable world, but the identification of the actual global order through an attentive listening that recognizes the

little we have been reduced to, in an implosion of identity that is itself a sign of the times.

Informality serves not only as a principle of selection, but also one of rejection, laden with structural consequences. Intimations of duty in speech or actions are relativized or pushed to the margins, since here they would sound a discordant note. Observed with rigour, this decision to be un-rigorous imposes its socio-historical stamp on everything. Yet the resonances of the inner imperative do not disappear: excluded as subject matter, they return in the severe objectivity of artistic composition, hovering over the book like a troublesome ghost, fully alive only in another hemisphere. That said, the whole has no separate, self-sufficient existence. The majority of the things, terms and ideas of which it is composed—the *modernized* part, to be precise—have no shape of their own; or better, have the shape of the world from which they differ. The discrepancy is the result of functional differences, which give rise to a kind of abstract local colour. Dissimilar and correlative, the social universes of centre and periphery are interwoven. Nonetheless, any awkwardness here would be no less noticeable and artistically fatal than it would be in prose works as distinctive and removed from the dominant usage as, say, *Macunaíma* or *Grande Sertão: Veredas*; works that are an inventive halfway house between dialect and idiolect, based on local, grammatical and orthographic peculiarities. It is as if, unbeknownst to itself, modernized Brazil were developing an irregularity, a kind of regionalism, in the present context of a world presumed to be homogeneous. This differentiation demands a literary discipline of enormous subtlety.

The aim of the ironies is to measure up to the disappointments brought on by the actual course of events. The figurative task and clear-eyed conclusions of nineteenth-century realism act as a baseline of lucidity, although here they are extremely condensed, and far removed from the internal dynamism they formerly nourished—notably in the years prior to 1964, during the radical phase of developmentalist populism. The mini-episodes aspire to a certain loose representativeness, conveying something of capital and provinces, Brazil and Europe, mansion and slave quarters, educated and colloquial speech, plenty and destitution, rural patriarchy and urban anonymity, decorum and danger, all against an elided background of unsolved social problems. Once this order of oppositions is accepted, other poems find their place: the discordant informality in one resonating with its neighbouring variants to

give the whole not only a common scale but the material breadth and dimensions of a historical formation, a literary universe. What is new in *Elefante* comes not so much from the glaring social contrasts—these are well known—but in a certain modification of the interconnexions between them, which seem to have been abandoned by an integrating, transforming tension. The present has expanded not only in space and time but in the social order, which now includes elements to which it was until recently opposed, or which it believed it had overcome. Some of the *dicta* in these poems go back to the end of slavery, others to the Old Republic—between the fall of the Brazilian Empire in 1889 and the 1930 revolution—and many more to modernized Brazil, including the leaden years of the dictatorship and the subsequent period of political liberalization ('the time of lean kine / when the country had been redemocratized', as an ex-state governor explains in 'Ancient History').³² Despite the great disparities that slot themselves effortlessly into this succession of historical periods, the emphasis is on what remains constant, giving rise to the counterintuitive feeling—the realization?—that change has made no difference. The past has not passed, and it no longer helps, as before, to invent a future that remains hidden from view. The persistence of the present marks it as different; but more in the sense of being defective than original, or backward, or on the road to recovery. Above all, the present makes one find in the past premonitory signs of the current impasse, again refuting the appearance of progress.

In analogous fashion, the interplay between informality and norm has lost the temporal axis once linked to the promises of modernization. Informality has not been defeated, nor does bourgeois normality seem to lie ahead; indeed, it could be said that the norm is *passé* while informality has taken hold for the foreseeable future. It is worth pointing out that the static background to this dynamic is a silent relative to the scandalous discoveries made by Tropicalism three decades ago, which gave shape to the aesthetic consequences of the counterrevolution of 1964 and subsequent conservative modernization.³³ The typical image

³² *História antiga* // Na época das vacas magras / redemocratizado o país

³³ For an account of *Tropicalismo* see Roberto Schwarz, 'Culture and Politics in Brazil, 1964–1969', in *Misplaced Ideas*, London 1992, pp. 139–44. The movement's heyday came between the coup of 1964 and the accession of Garrastazu Médici in 1969; its most famous proponent was the popular singer and composer Caetano Veloso, whose lyrics often juxtaposed modern and traditional aspects of Brazil in deliberately jarring ways.

of the time, presented above all in theatre, film, popular music and the graphic arts, was an allegory of the Brazilian absurd, understood either as the ultra-modern reproduction of social backwardness or an incomprehensible penchant for recidivism. It was a formula for dramatizing the incongruous and depolarized coexistence of elements of the patriarchal-personalized world, outdated, ridiculous, and flourishing as never before, with international patterns of modernity, themselves equally open to question. This was a picturesque, strident, shameful and true juxtaposition, with no future in view, saying in its own fashion that the hypothesis of a historical reshaping on a different level had disappeared. The parallel between these artistic methods—*Tropicalismo*, Alvim's *Elefante*—and the respective historical moments at which they appeared merits reflection.

In a hostile review that came out soon after *Elefante* was published, one commentator drew attention to the connexion between Alvim's poetry and a strand of critical thinking on Brazil, indebted to modernism and with links to the aesthetic and theoretical work of politicized university groups.³⁴ The observation is correct, but the objection is surprising. Is it inappropriate for poetry to reflect upon its country? Does the poet's proximity to political and social debate reduce the scope of what he writes? Is the attempt to give meaning to the world of the modernists, in changed circumstances, a failing in itself? Of course, it would be possible to consider the poet's 'intimate feeling for his time and for his country' recommended by Machado de Assis, and certainly present in *Elefante*, as no more than a nostalgic myth. There would be some truth in this if the nation really had ceased to exist, which is not entirely evident; but even this would not detract from the historic desire that it should exist. Besides, there is no reason why the weakening of the national pulse should not serve as material for reflection and poetry in its turn.

Across the universe

There is, however, another side to the book, composed of properly lyrical poems, to which nothing of what we have said is applicable; at least, not directly. Here the mythology and language are personal, the intention expressive, the transfiguring power of imagination operates to a high

³⁴ Paulo Franchetti, 'O 'poema-coctail' e a inteligência fatigada', *Caderno 2, O Estado de São Paulo*, 5 November 2000.

degree and the subject is 'first' not 'second' nature—light and shade; water, sand and wind; animals and landscapes—rather than the system of our social constraints. A literal translation can give only the faintest sense of what is at play in this work:

Elephant

The air of your flesh, dark air
darkens stone and wind.
Enormity courses within your body
the air of crushed skies. The firmament,
a blaze of pilasters,
is not outside—it is collapsing inside.
On the shield there reverberates the dull brightness
of the swollen battering ram
with which you enrage distance and time.

Your smooth, dancer's tread
ennobles the cold, feminine
bellies.

When you turn everything sings.
Everything does not know.³⁵

These are difficult poems, of great beauty, requiring a second round of commentary that will have to wait for another occasion. For the moment, a few preliminary observations. Everything depends on understanding the reasons that would lead the poet to combine such discrepant imaginary forms. Is he saying that, removed from the shared ground and realist anecdotes of Brazilian life, his lyricism begins to spin off kilter? Or that the atmosphere of contemporary reality is necessary to the integrity of his poetry? Or again, that this highly transfigured first nature should be seen as a character within the other universe, with which it forms a unity? If this is so, what is the connexion between these two spheres, of such differing tonalities? What do they say about each other? As a suggestion, we could ask what relations might exist

³⁵ *Elefante* // O ar de tua carne, ar escuro / anottece pedra e vento. / Corre o enorme dentro de teu corpo / o ar externo / de céus atropelados. O firmamento, / incêndio de pilstras, / não está fora — rui por dentro / Reverbera no escudo o brilho baço / do túrgido aríete / com que distância e tempo enfureces. // Teu pisar macio, dança-rino, / enobrece os ventres frios, / femininos. // A tua volta tudo canta. / Tudo desconhece.

between the degraded social world and the visions of the elephant, the rhinoceros, the sea: giants whose darkness contains light, whose imposing, unified mass does good and whose onslaught seems more likely to fertilize and repair than to destroy. The intense moral suffering that dominates the book's final poems may be seen as part of the same world: in this case as its truth. Here, the lyrical side of the book occupies a sphere of revelation, analogous to the adventures of the central characters within the realist novel, to which correspond the constraints that operate on the secondary characters, even when neither know anything of them. That does not mean the anti-lyrical poems are secondary; quite the contrary. Still, the distance between the cosmic feeling and the interplay of interests is telling, and relates to history rather than to nature. The collection ends:

In a churchyard

Clouds go by
The gaze does not perceive the screech of the stars³⁶

The formal operations through which Alvim works are incisive. By means of purification, juxtaposition, cutting and pasting, analytical dissection, a whole repertoire of intensely Brazilian scenes and phrases is mapped out against unforeseen co-ordinates. Instead of the lines and stanzas that would correspond to poetic traditions, we have a feel for living language and its written presentation; or, better, an ear for the objective ironies of everyday speech, pared to the bone—which is, in the end, no more or less than the aesthetic refinement of historical consciousness.

What is taking place is the deconventionalization of form, its liberation from confinement, the removal of its esoteric element, and its replacement by an open, amphibious state, in which the poetic process and the real order of things are truly joined to each other. There is no desire to renounce form and its true value, nor to abandon refinement. Quite the contrary, the impulse is one of actualization, of bringing up to date. Opened up by local, national or cosmopolitan perspectives that can bear a negative or positive sign, depending on the angle and moment, phrases from common speech take on a dizzying resonance

³⁶ *Num adro // Nuvens passam / O olhar não percebe o barulho dos astros*

that dispenses with metaphor; that is itself metaphor and poetry. Pop art and the ready-made are obvious referents, albeit from a different context. In this case, however, the objects randomly selected for our contemplation do not derive from industrial civilization, but specifically from the workings of a peripheral society, captured as such, as a modern focus of perplexity. 'Poetry exists in facts.'⁷

But if Alvim is the contemporary poet who has most deeply assimilated the lessons of the Brazilian modernists, it is within horizons completely changed. It is enough to recall the dazzled fascination with which that earlier generation discovered our social and cultural peculiarities, embraced them and longed to transform them into historical solutions—'so Brazil'. These social forces persist in *Elefante* and compose a system; there are a few fine moments of playful magic. But in essence they constitute our hard political and moral inheritance. As Alvim himself has said, it is a question of Oswald revised in the light of Drummond; or of the problem that lay hidden within the picturesqueness of Brazil.

⁷ Oswald de Andrade, 'Manifesto da Poesia Pau-Brasil', in *Do Pau-Brasil à antropofagia e às utopias*, Rio de Janeiro 1978, p. 5.

Translated by John Gledson.

PETER WOLLEN

FRIDAMANIA

THE FIRST RETROSPECTIVE of Frida Kahlo's work outside Mexico opened at the Whitechapel Gallery in London in May 1982, organized and co-curated by Laura Mulvey and myself. In fact, it was a joint exhibition of works by Kahlo and Tina Modotti, the Italian-American-Mexican photographer, who herself subsequently became the object of a minor kind of 'Tinamania'. At that time, Mulvey and I were hostile to the idea of shows limited to the work of a single artist and felt that a contrast between two related bodies of work was more revealing than a self-contained one-person event. We also wanted to display photography on an equal footing with painting. After its opening at the Whitechapel the show travelled to Germany and Stockholm, before going on to the Grey Gallery in New York and, finally, to the National Art Museum in Mexico City. The North American venues were added after the exhibition had opened, as a direct result of its impact in Europe, its word-of-mouth reputation. The effect of this was to introduce Kahlo's work to the us—more specifically to its artistic and intellectual capital, New York—in 1983, at roughly the same time that Hayden Herrera's biography of Kahlo came out. It was, I believe, the conjunction of these two events, the exhibition and the book, that sparked off an interest in the us, which later fed into or converged with the enthusiasm in Europe and Mexico to produce 'Fridamania': the elevation of Kahlo to cult status.

Since then, there has been a stream of further exhibitions, catalogues, books—and eventually postcards, calendars, wall-posters, folding screens, diaries and feature films, Paul Leduc's and now Julie Taymor's. Within a decade, Frida Kahlo had become probably one of the most instantly recognizable artists in the world. How did it happen? And why? As we shall see, these questions raise a number of issues that are central to the

way we construe the history of taste, the reception of art and the generation of cultural icons.

In Coyoacán

To begin with the question of why we wanted to put on the show in the first place: this may verge on self-portraiture, but perhaps that is appropriate in writing about an artist like Kahlo. We were not art historians and had never organized an art exhibition before. We were film theorists and avant-garde film-makers. We went to Mexico together for a Christmas holiday, 1978–79, staying with a friend who taught Japanese Political History at the Colegio de México. Before that, I had seen one Kahlo painting, *Portrait of Frida and Diego*, at the historic exhibition ‘Women Artists: 1550–1950’, put on by Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin in 1976. However, Kahlo did not figure at all prominently in my thinking as I planned what to see on the trip. There was scant information in the books I looked at—Rivera’s wife, did some painting. I first became more conscious of her role after arriving in Mexico City, because she is portrayed—alongside Tina Modotti—as a revolutionary handing out arms to the workers and peasants in the murals Rivera painted in the courtyard of the Ministry of Education building in Mexico City. Later we went to the suburb of Coyoacán, primarily to visit Trotsky’s house. The Blue House, which belonged to Kahlo, was nearby, and so we decided to visit that too. As it turned out, it was the Blue House that made the greater impact.

In fact, there was only one room of Kahlo paintings there—by no means the best ones. The impact came from the house itself. Looking back on it, I located it in my mind in a series that included the Gaudí houses in Barcelona (especially the Casa Batlló and the roof of the Pedrera) and the Watts Towers in Los Angeles. I had already, in a sense, ‘exhibited’ Gaudí via the script of Antonioni’s film, *The Passenger*, which I co-wrote with Mark Peploe some years previously. A number of scenes in the film are set in Gaudí buildings. In general, I was interested in a certain kind of intensely personal or ‘outsider’ architecture. I still am. This interest derives from surrealism and it came as no surprise that it was André Breton who ‘discovered’ Kahlo as a painter, wrote the catalogue essay for her first New York show (1939, at the Julien Levy Gallery) and organized an exhibition of her work in Paris that same year. Breton personally instigated the reception of her work abroad and it was as a surrealist (or

para-surrealist) that she was originally perceived outside Mexico—and to some extent inside as well.

The 'outsider' aspect of the Blue House had another important quality, beyond its relationship with surrealism. It stood in stark contrast to the white walls, empty spaces and techno-hygienic aspect of the typical museum of modern art. It was a cluttered, domestic space, brightly coloured and full of idiosyncratic objects. In many ways, I saw Kahlo as challenging orthodox doctrines of modernism. First, of course, she was a woman artist and, by then, it was already well established that women had been relegated to a secondary place within the history of modernism. Second, she was, in a sense, an 'outsider' artist, untrained, non-professional, painting out of her own desire without seeking to exhibit; and this too put her in a marginal position vis-à-vis the mainstream art world. Third, she was from Mexico, a country outside the European–United States bloc that was culturally hegemonic. Fourth, she had ties with surrealism which, although accepted within the history of modernism, was still somewhat suspect, both within the rationalist Bauhaus account of art history and within the Greenberg art-for-art's sake version. I was also interested in the implications of her political involvements—with Trotsky, but also with orthodox Communism.

After visiting the Blue House, I made more of a conscious effort to see Kahlo's work and the decisive moment probably came when, shortly afterwards, I saw the paintings exhibited in the Modern Art Museum in Chapultepec Park, especially *The Two Fridas*, certainly her most ambitious work available to me. On returning to London we went to the Whitechapel Gallery and suggested an exhibition—a project accepted by the director and by Mark Francis, the in-house curator responsible. I made a number of trips to Mexico, by myself and then with Mark Francis, to trace all the work and to secure the loans. During this time I met Hayden Herrera, through mutual friends; we were able to exchange information—although I learned more from her than she did from me. Her work was already more advanced than mine although the book finally appeared after the show. During this time I also wrote a piece, a hybrid of fiction and essay, called 'Mexico/Women/Art', which was published in London in 1979 in the *Saturday Night Reader*, an anthology edited by Emma Tennant.

I recently reread this piece for the first time in many years and was intrigued to see the line I took. The first paragraph mentions Rivera and muralism, Breton and surrealism, Trotsky and revolutionary communism. But its centrepiece is 'her unrelenting struggle against injury and ill-health'. As we shall see, this was a crucial element in the construction of the Kahlo legend. I go on to stress the 'non-western' (or 'Third World') aspects of Kahlo's art and compare Mexico with Iran, a country in which I had lived for some time. I was clearly preoccupied with questions about the history of modernism and the meaning of the idea of an 'avant-garde', issues which simultaneously arose for me out of my work as a film-maker. I was also fascinated by Kahlo's use of popular art and imagery, especially the *ex-voto* paintings she collected, which relate directly to her own history of medical disasters. I was interested in the ways in which the avant-garde of the sixties—Fluxus, for example—picked up the threads of the twenties—women's art, political art, photography, popular imagery, environment, performance—and how these threads were also relevant to Kahlo. There is a whole section on Kahlo's use of Tehuana costume, linking it to feminism, to the tragic drama of the body, to the 'creolization' of indigenous cultures and to the psychoanalytic theory of masquerade.

Cult formation

In a way, I was trying, through a consideration of Kahlo, to develop a theory of what was not yet called postmodernism, through recourse to the repressed other side of modernism, while retaining the very non-postmodern concept of the avant-garde. In a way, I saw Kahlo as presaging a different kind of avant-gardism, as a proleptic art-historical mutation. The things that interested me in her work were in many ways the same things that drove the formation of the Kahlo cult. The work had an immediate relevance and a powerful impact, for me personally, back when I first encountered it; so, in a certain sense, I should not have been so surprised when, as the work became disseminated, it began to have such a powerful effect on others. This is all the more true, perhaps, in that I was not an art historian or a museum professional. I was myself a lay viewer. Yet the formation of a cult requires more than personal relevance or impact, however powerful—and I believe Fridamania is a kind of cult; seeming, at times, like the classic cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe (or the Mater Dolorosa) in its implications and its intensity. Kahlo too has her disciples, her devotees, her pilgrims and even

her altars. There have to be specific features in the work that converge towards the generation of a cult, but there also has to be something else—a relationship between work and life, a certain historical context. What follows are some hypothetical suggestions about cult-formation and its preconditions.

First, there was the rise of feminism and the associated interest in women's art. Kahlo's work was originally (partially) introduced into the United States in a chicano context, on the West Coast, a few years before the Grey Gallery show. But it was as a woman painter that she seized the public imagination. In many ways she was an ideal candidate for culthood. She was dead, and therefore monumental in a way barred to any living artist, without being too remote in time. She died in 1954, still in her early forties. She was also Mexican—in a way that enabled her to appear both as a Third World artist, even a woman of colour, and as an artist who was herself able to appropriate the 'otherness' of Mexico to double the primary 'otherness' of being a woman. She was overshadowed by a more famous husband—as were Sophie Tauber, Sonia Delaunay, Varvara Stepanova, Gabriele Münter, Barbara Hepworth, Georgia O'Keefe, Lee Krasner and others. Her situation was both typical, in this crucial respect, while untypical in others. She was a deeply wounded woman, literally—if also psychologically, by aspects of her relationship with Rivera. The mystique of the suffering artist has always been powerful, but its effect was intensified in the context of feminism.

Second, the re-discovery of Kahlo coincided with the return of figuration in painting in the 1970s: Kiefer, Immendorf, Chia, Clemente, Salle, Fischl. This was linked, of course, to the decline of high modernism, the backlash against conceptualism and the rise of the idea of post-modernism. This painting, however, was almost exclusively a male affair. Women artists were on track two—photography, the medium used by Kruger, Sherman and others. Kahlo suggested an alternative pictorial tradition for women, one which was given added force by her choice of self-portraiture as a primary mode. Her art was intimate, private and personal; it was about her identity as a woman and a Mexican; it was about the body—very specifically the female body and, even more specifically, her own; it was about babies or the lack of them, clothes and their signification, the contradictory projection of both strength and weakness. It was in violent contrast to the pretentious asceticism of much

late modernism, to its vatic emptiness, to its tedious aspiration to being high art, to its ultra-refined painterliness. Moreover, Kahlo's paintings, though small in size, unlike much male gallery art, were immediately striking, poignant, even violent in their attack. They prevailed, in part, because of their sheer quality. They also reproduced well—and this is meant as a compliment rather than a reproach.

More needs to be said about the cult of the 'suffering artist'—a phenomenon that underlies earlier cults such as those of Van Gogh or Modigliani, and even Judy Garland or Marilyn Monroe. The 'suffering woman artist' brought with it an extra emotional charge—personal suffering was overlaid on gender victimization in a way that facilitated intense psychological identification with the cult figure. Kahlo's art, of course, is much more complex than this formulation suggests, but cults are not themselves driven by a concern with complexity. In many ways the closest analogy to the cult of Kahlo is that of Sylvia Plath. Plath too was damaged and hospitalized—although psychologically rather than physically—and lived through a deeply ambiguous and painful relationship with a more famous husband. (Of course, degrees of fame change over time. Kahlo may well be more famous now than Rivera, Modotti than Weston. I believe that in both cases their work now sells for more than that of their male partner.) The energy driving interest in Plath plainly comes from a complex of victimization, blame, abjectness and fascination with violence, inwardly and outwardly directed. Much the same could be said about Kahlo.

In both cases the cult is sustained by the construction of a multiplicity of different types of documentation: the publication of the work, of biographies, collections of letters, private diaries, critical assessments, books of photographs, films and television programmes, as well as the related works of their husbands or other intimates. This build-up of sources makes possible a much stronger identification than would be possible simply from the work itself. Devotees can feel they know the object of their devotion in a detailed and intimate way, one that provides privileged insights into the idol's emotional life. This is not simply the accumulation of trivia: as more and more material on their private lives is made available, the sense that one can understand how Kahlo or Plath felt, that one can identify with their deepest and innermost feelings, becomes more convincing. In this sense too, the Blue House is also a site with a strong emotional charge, comparable to that provided

by Charleston or Virginia Woolf's home, similarly open to the public, in the consolidation of the Bloomsbury cult. Culthood relies on this kind of identification. It becomes self-sustaining, as the growth of a cult provides its own audience for more publications that have to be filled with more information, images and commentary.

Concealment and display

Of course, the personal material on which Kahlo drew when she painted remains important and significant, not in any way irrelevant to her art. Problems only arise because there is simultaneously a drive towards simplification. In reality, Kahlo's art is unusually complex and contradictory, as indeed is Plath's. We can see this by looking, for example, at the role played by Kahlo's costume in her self-portraits and, as we know from biographies and photographs, in her self-presentation in everyday life. In the first instance, her choice of traditional Mexican costume, particularly of long skirts, reflects the need (or desire) to conceal her injuries, sustained in a traffic accident when she was eighteen. An electric train crashed through the bus in which she was travelling. Kahlo was impaled on a broken piece of steel handrail from the lead car of the train. Her spine was broken in three places, two ribs were broken, her pelvis was broken in three places, her collar-bone was broken, her right leg had eleven fractures, her right foot was crushed and the left shoulder dislocated. Plainly, what she wore served to conceal the extent of her injuries. The particular choice of clothes, however, also served to remind viewers of the injuries by drawing attention to the studied idiosyncrasy of her dress, through a kind of 'negative display'. Kahlo made her costumes into extreme and multiple signifiers and, as time went on, they became increasingly elaborate.

First, the clothes simply signified her Mexicanness. In the 1920s, following the Mexican Revolution, this was an unproblematic choice. Kahlo, however, persisted in this emphasis throughout her life, becoming more extreme as she adopted Tehuana costume as her preferred style. It seems that originally this may have been to please Rivera, who frequently visited the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and painted the women there. After his return to Mexico from Paris shortly after the stabilization of the Revolution, Rivera was sent on a visit to Tehuantepec by his patron, José Vasconcelos, then Minister of Education. Vasconcelos wanted to de-Europeanize Rivera, to restore his sense of Mexicanness, and chose

Tehuantepec as the representative site of an unspoiled, yet rich, native culture. As it happened, the region was most renowned for its women—both for their social status as ‘strong women’ and for their striking local costumes. (They were also famed for their unembarrassed nudity. Naked Tehuanas standing in the river were a frequent subject for folkloric photography.) Rivera learned the lesson Vasconcelos intended and painted images of Tehuana women in full costume in the Ministry of Education murals which he executed after his return. He retained his artistic interest in women of the Isthmus and, supposedly, was pleased when Kahlo adopted their style. In any case, she clearly made it her own. It combined the imagery of the strong woman, the matriarch, with that of authentic Mexicanness (at least, according to legend) as well as making a virtue out of necessity by turning defensive concealment into aggressive and extravagant display.

Rivera himself was renowned as a mythomane, a compulsive liar and inventor of amazing tales. As Kahlo noted, he was a fabulist on the grand scale, rather than a petty deceiver. He was also a fervent publicity-seeker who consciously projected a larger-than-life image. In this respect, Kahlo learned from Rivera how to create a vivid public legend of oneself. The fact that she was intent on creating her own mythic identity—of which the cripple/Tehuana complex was the central element—itself facilitated the creation of a cult many years after her death. Paradoxically perhaps, her highly semiotized self-presentation only had its full effect at a kind of meta-level, through her self-portraiture, as it appeared to a quite different audience in a context far from any she had anticipated. It is important to stress that Kahlo’s self-portraiture was imbricated with self-fabulation from a very early stage. The self she portrays is a constructed and carefully contrived one that finally crystallizes in the imagery of Frida-as-Tehuana, which appropriates what was for her, as for Diego, as indeed for us, an exotic image and develops it for her own purposes.

In the early 1990s, I saw an exhibition in Mexico City of representations of Tehuana women by Mexican painters, from the early nineteenth century through to the present. The imagery Kahlo used falls into a long tradition of pictorial representation of the Tehuana and celebration of tropical and feminine Mexico. This imagery changed as artistic styles did, but also as attitudes to the Isthmus and the South evolved. Different artists used the Tehuana image in very different ways. Saturnino Herrán evokes the Andalusian gypsy; Adolfo Best Maugard assimilates the

Tehuana to the Indian houri; Roberto Montenegro's portrait of Rosa Rolando in the elaborate face-encircling Tehuana head-dress is severe and makes her look like a Mother Superior. Rivera stresses a haughty aloofness and self-possession, preferring images of men and women together, dancing the *sandunga*. Tina Modotti (in her photographs) shows women at menial work or with infants and small children; Miguel Covarrubias stylizes and emphasizes Indianness, and so on. More recently the photography of Graciela Iturbide and the painting of Julio Galán strike a more eccentric note, garish and even grotesque.

Kahlo uses Tehuana costume explicitly as a form of masquerade with multiple and contradictory associations: masquerade as signifier of and defence against femininity; of—and against—physical damage and trauma; masquerade as exaggerated signifier of Mexicanness, concentrated in the legend of the Isthmus. Masquerade, of course, is always necessarily, in some sense, a theatrical mode. Kahlo dramatizes herself through her costume. On one level this is the simple display of identification with the other that accompanies all exotic dress, whether hippie street-fashion or designer clothes from Zandra Rhodes. At another level, it dramatizes the trauma Frida Kahlo had undergone, with its symbolic implications of rape and castration. These implications, in turn, link the physical maiming to the symbolic maiming we can associate, in psychoanalytic terms, with femininity. At the same time the fearless exhibitionism and bravura of the costume conveys pride and self-confidence. This in turn can be associated with the folkloric association of the Tehuana woman with power and strength, with Tehuantepec as the site of a mythical matriarchy. As with Plath's symbolic universe, the central metaphors are used to convey both extreme and contradictory fantasies. In two important paintings, the costume is depicted on a hanger, detached from the body, a signifier in its own right.

Those eyes

Kahlo's iconography is carefully controlled and contains other significant elements beyond costume. Her hair becomes a metaphor, whether close cropped or flowing luxuriously, adorned with ribbons, combs, flowers or butterflies. Some paintings show her moustache, others eradicate it. She tends to emphasize the single strong continuous line of her eyebrows, whereas in photographs this striking feature is much less pronounced, even absent. Her self-portraits always have a powerful directed gaze,

looking straight out at the viewer. 'Look at those eyes', Picasso supposedly wrote to Rivera, 'neither you nor I are capable of anything like it'. Apocryphal or not, it seems right to compare Kahlo's concern over eyes in her paintings with Picasso's. They immediately engage the viewer, piercingly, with complete self-possession. Finally, there are the accoutrements—above all, the wounds and the monkeys. The wounds speak for themselves, although where they are most blatantly and bloodily displayed—as in the series which followed her miscarriage in Detroit: *Henry Ford Hospital* and *My Birth*—or, displaced, as in *A Few Small Nips* or the ex-voto *The Suicide of Dorothy Hale*, they are related directly to the themes of birth and death as violent acts. The monkeys—mimics, grimacers, pets—are associated with infants (desired, miscarried, defunct), with Diego (as ape, as child), with Frida herself (with facial hair), with Mexico (its exuberant local fauna) and with tropical nature (contrasted with the cold industrial north). Again the apparent stylistic simplicity of Kahlo's paintings, with their vernacular sources, is belied by its metaphorical and allegorical complexity.

Kahlo's relationship with the imagery of Mexicanness has also played a part in the reception of her work abroad. Mexico has long had an appeal for artists and intellectuals, becoming a kind of semi-mythical country, a site for the projection of dreams and fantasies: Mayakovsky, Eisenstein, Lawrence, Lowry, Huston, Hart Crane, Edward Weston, Burroughs, Breton—the list goes on. Eisenstein, in particular, internalized the legends of Mexicanness—including those of Tehuantepec and the *sandunga*—and sought to re-project them outside in his film *¡Que viva México!* The cult of Kahlo draws on this historic fascination, a mythology first constructed in Mexico itself during the 'Mexican Renaissance' of the 1920s as a myth of identity, then re-fashioned elsewhere or by visitors as a myth of otherness. This mythology of Mexico is one of an alternative America, constructed in contrast and opposition to the North, to the United States. Nature versus manufacture, dream versus reality principle, magic and miracle versus science and technology, essential humanity versus mechanization, enjoyment versus work or repression, acceptance versus denial of death. These antinomies also structure Kahlo's work—as well as the utopian vision of the grafting together of the two which she and Rivera saw metaphorically realized in the agricultural experiments of Luther Burbank. The availability of this myth—and its potential attractiveness, as with all myths of otherness—

also underlies the appeal of Kahlo's work outside Mexico and provides a foundation for Fridamania.

Myth and monster

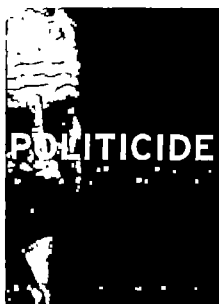
From a purist point of view, the cult of Kahlo may seem to disqualify her from being a great artist. But this is no more true of Kahlo than it is of Plath. Looking for a moment at literature rather than at visual art, it has always struck me that literary critics are deeply ambivalent about works with mythic status. Melville's *Great White Whale* is acceptable, even admirable, yet Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* monster is less so, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* hardly acceptable at all. And what about J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* or Wodehouse's *Jeeves*? In art history these issues hardly come up at all—mythic iconic figures belong to the movies or to strip cartoons, not to art at all. Only with Pop Art, when Lichtenstein or Warhol produce work parasitic on popular art, is this popular mythology admitted and then it is assumed that, as a meta-discourse, high art somehow elevates its subject matter by appropriating it. Myth is somewhat different from cult, but the two are closely connected. Cult figures almost always draw on myths, just as cult films do: *Casablanca*, *Rebel Without A Cause*, *Blade Runner*. In the case of Kahlo the growth of Fridamania is partly dependent on her manipulation of mythic, and psychoanalytic, material; but at the same time, Kahlo's art is unthinkable without it.

Given the cultural status the art world assigns to itself, there could plainly be a tendency for Kahlo's status as an artist to fall as her status as a cult figure rises. This is not necessarily the case, as the example of Van Gogh demonstrates—although Toulouse-Lautrec would probably be a better comparison here. I believe, however, that as the modernist paradigm disintegrates, her position as an artist will remain secure. Whether we look at Kahlo from the vantage-point of women's art, Third World art or surrealism; whether we are interested in the appropriation of vernacular forms or the crossover between outsider and fine art, we will find Kahlo's paintings staring us right in the face. As a woman artist Kahlo is certainly comparable with Tanning, Carrington, Agar or the more mainstream female surrealists, all of them underestimated; and as a surrealist *tout court* she is comparable with Miró or Matta or Lam or Masson. Mexican art is due for revaluation, as is the place of the two major women artists, Kahlo and María Izquierdo, within it. Kahlo's use of vernacular forms is complex and unique and a re-evaluation of out-

sider art, breaking down the artificial barriers erected around specialized forms like the art of psychotics or naive art, can only benefit her. Once we recognize that even an artist like Jackson Pollock has an outsider aspect, it will be hard to hold such status against Kahlo. Indeed it may well come to appear one of her greatest strengths.

Paradoxically, it was precisely Kahlo's success that threatened to do most damage by diverting attention from women artists of the sixties and seventies whose reputation was still not firmly secured—artists as different as Eva Hesse, Judy Chicago or Mary Kelly. Kelly, in particular, is an artist whose work is autobiographical in ways that are strangely similar to Kahlo's, though formally completely different, more intellectually demanding and lacking Kahlo's immediate eye-catching appeal. It is important to place Kahlo alongside artists like these, to recontextualize her historically, in order to reconfigure the history of women's art itself and establish its foundations more securely. In a similar way, the Mexican Renaissance also needs to be reconfigured. I began by explaining how I became interested in Kahlo's work precisely because it seemed to me to challenge what I saw as orthodox interpretations and doctrines of modernism. Since then, the reconfiguration of modernism itself has been under way in many different places, involving many different arguments. Frida Kahlo was as good a place to start as any other. But we still need to extend and expand our reconsideration of twentieth-century art, looking at every aspect of modernism that was marginalized and reconceptualizing the role of women, non-western and outsider or eccentric artists. As we do this we shall diminish the importance of Fridamania and be able to focus once again on the complexity, intensity and startling beauty of her work.

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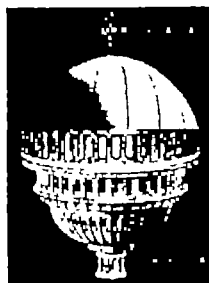
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Robin Blackburn, *Banking on Death. Or, Investing in Life: The history and future of pensions*

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GÖRAN THERBORN

CAPITAL'S TWILIGHT ZONE

Second only to war, pensions have become the most divisive—and, perhaps, the most decisive—issue of contemporary politics. Massive popular mobilizations on the question during the nineties brought down Silvio Berlusconi's government in Italy (1994–95) and Alain Juppé's in France (1995–96). In the summer of 2003, it poses the most direct political challenge to ruling parties of every hue: German Social Democrats, French neo-Gaullists, Austrian Christian Democrats and the newly elected PT in Brazil. Returned to power, Berlusconi is lobbying for a 'Maastricht del welfare', a Europe-wide downsizing of public pensions that would have, according to the *Corriere della Sera*, 'the same binding force as Maastricht has had for the common currency'. Across the Atlantic, the mayor of Mexico City Andrés Manuel López Obrador is using Latin America's second oldest (after Cuba) universal pension system—financed, within a pre-given budget framework, through more effective property management and by 'republican austerity' cutting bureaucratic perks—as a promising springboard for a possible presidential bid.

Pensions have made governments, as well as broken them. In the mid-fifties the new West German earnings-indexed pension system cemented Christian Democratic power, along with German rearmament and *Westbindung*, for another decade and more—worn down at last by the ineptitude of Ludwig Erhard, who had anyway opposed the pension reform. Swedish Social Democracy survived the political erosions of the

fifties' boom through an ambitious and carefully designed occupational pensions' scheme, for which it campaigned vigorously. The master stroke was the provision that white-collar employees—most of whom already had a company or industry-wide, collectively bargained pension—could opt out in favour of a private arrangement that was equally comprehensive, generous and inflation-secure. Employers and the Liberal leadership of a major white-collar union both had a political interest in a separate scheme, but were forced to admit they could not come up with an equivalent alternative. From the 1960 election onwards, white-collar employees transferred their political support *en masse* to the Social Democrats, who remained in power for a further fifteen years until the nuclear issue polarized the electorate along different lines.

Pension policies stand at the intersection of three major social arteries. The changing human life-course—increasing longevity, earlier retirement—has made them, firstly, increasingly salient in everyday experience. Secondly, established entitlements for old age have tended to acquire a legitimacy bestowed on few other welfare provisions, and are often defended in terms of human rights. Tampering with these is a very risky enterprise in any democratic system; American 'social security' is perhaps the only major New Deal institution to have survived the attentions of Reagan, Clinton and Bush. Thirdly, given the massive funds involved, they engage the interests of high finance. Public pensions comprise 10–15 per cent of GDP in Western Europe and in the mid-nineties made up 7 per cent of GDP in the us. Pension funds, most of them private, have become major players in the world economy. At their peak in 1999, their total assets corresponded to almost half—46 per cent—of world income, having risen from about 30 per cent in 1992. After losses of \$2,700 billion in the last three years—equivalent to almost two years of UK national income—pension fund assets are now back at a third of total world GDP, or nearly twice (180 per cent) the combined product of all low and middle-income countries. Fifty-six per cent of fund assets are held by American funds, 9 per cent by British ones.

Recognition of the importance of the political economy of pensions has been slow in coming, however. When, in the mid-eighties, a gifted Scandinavian graduate student told his supervisor, a very distinguished and perceptive Latin European political scientist at the European University Institute in Florence, that he wanted to write a thesis about pensions, he was met by a wall of incomprehension. Why should anyone be interested in such a boring topic? In 1994, however, the World Bank opened fire with its most ambitious and aggressive policy document to date. *Averting the Old Age Crisis: Policies to Protect the Old and to Promote Growth* is a book-length attack on public pensions—other than as final stopgap before indigence—and paean to privately funded systems, feeding into the financial markets. This remarkable

publication combined the vast resources of the Bank, deployed for far-reaching research, with strongly biased comparisons and aggressive political pleading. Estelle James and the other World Bank policy-makers understood, long before Donald Rumsfeld, that the best way to attack the well-entrenched social institutions of Western Europe was to line up the Eastern Europeans, many of whose politicians, senior bureaucrats and opinion-makers had long been conditioned to rotate around a powerful sun. In 1996 the Bank organized an invited gathering in Budapest, flying in their economists—including a key ambassador of *Pinochetista* scheming in Chile—to 'sell' private pensions to East and Central Europe. All the social-policy specialists were either sceptical or critical; but Treasury officials were enthralled. Such fascination was not confined to the ex-Soviet bloc: that year's Finnish budget bill was discovered to have lifted paragraphs directly from the World Bank report, without citation, under the guise of the Helsinki Treasury view.

Robin Blackburn's *Banking on Death* is therefore a most timely book; it is also a beautiful read, enlivened by the wisdom of, *inter alia*, La Rochefoucauld, Gogol and Adorno, with illustrations by Goya, among others. As a scholar, Blackburn is best known as a major synthetic historian of slavery, but he brings to the study of pensions his wide-ranging experience as editor of *NLR* and recent transatlantic university assignments. Academic writers on social policy are usually either social scientists or historians, and tend to respect a deeply entrenched division of labour: historians write about origins and paths of development, social scientists on current issues and outcomes. Some historical sociologists, it is true, have plunged into the past; but Blackburn here is writing about the present as history, and as a narrative historian.

A scholar entering a new field can often provide fresh insights by steering clear of the rutted tracks of the specialist; they may come at the cost of some errors of detail but, in this case, these are negligible. Unsurprisingly, Scandinavia and Scandinavians are sometimes difficult to handle. An interesting case can be made for Sweden rather than, as here, New Zealand as pioneer country of universal pensions. The expatriate Danish social-policy expert Gösta Esping-Andersen would probably not appreciate the Swedish form of his patronymic, and the German-Swedish trade-union economist Rudolf Meidner, an important source of inspiration for Blackburn, is still very much alive and active in 'Social Democrats against the EMU'. The unsubstantiated statement that, in 1952, twelve Latin American countries had pensions systems 'catering to most of the population' is hard to believe; according to the Latin American social-policy specialist, Carmelo Mesa-Lago, only four countries—Argentina, Chile, Cuba and Uruguay—had the majority of their population covered by social insurance in 1960; they were joined by Brazil and Costa Rica in the 1970s.

The new perspective that Blackburn brings to the field, on the other hand, needs to be taken seriously by social-policy analysts. It involves at least three aspects: firstly, an awareness of the international political significance of pensions controversies, policies, institutions and struggles that ranges from Singapore to Spain, Chile to Greece—a panorama brought into focus by detailed accounts of British and American debates and proposals; secondly, some striking insights into the global economics of pension funding and fund management; thirdly, a sustained argument for a radical pensions policy that would bite into the current processes of capital accumulation. Without doubt, this is the most original section of the book. Blackburn's pension system would be two-tiered, consisting of a state pension that would provide benefits equal to at least 40 per cent of earnings as well as a range of pension funds geared to add another 30 per cent, up to a ceiling of three times the average wage. The second tier would be provided by three kinds of funds related to people's former college, employer and place of residence, including mutual insurance companies, thrifts and trade unions, all supervised by a pension board. Existing providers would be admitted to this tax-favoured system upon acceptance of certain rules of mild redistribution and of audit. This secondary pension for all—in countries where only half of all employees now have it—would get extra funding by mandatory share levies on corporate profits, the idea behind Meidner's politically ill-fated wage-earners' funds. The rather baroque complexity of this system follows from Blackburn's political strategy of building upon existing institutions and practices in the UK and US.

Blackburn's contribution may be summed up as a critique of the political economy of grey capitalism; as such it is outstanding. The alienation of the Anglo-Saxon worker from his or her pension rights is truly amazing. The occupational pension is 'sponsored' by the employing company, which appoints a board of 'trustees' to oversee the pension fund; the firm, meanwhile, has the right both to abstain from contributions during golden years on the stock market and to alter or even close the fund in bad times. Employees' savings are entrusted—for a fee, of course—to fund managers, who invest in the stock of other corporations, but who are accountable primarily to the shareholders of the fund. These 'institutional investors' may or may not choose to be active shareholders of the corporations they invest in. The pension policy-holders have no say whatsoever in these processes; trade-union attempts to influence the investment of the pension entitlements of their members have been dismissed, with the backing of the judiciary, in both the US and the UK. As Blackburn points out, these enormous funds are neither bound by clear property rights nor directed by any entrepreneurship. They constitute a huge grey zone of twilight legality and economics that stretches from established property law and corporate practice, on the one

hand, to the world of high-class crime personified by the robbery and fraud of Robert Maxwell and the Enron executives. This is the system that the fortunate half of the US and UK populations rely on; for the other half there is only the state minimum which, in Britain, at average male earnings, means a two-thirds drop in income upon retirement.

Blackburn makes a fascinating guide to this jungle, skilfully conducting the reader through 530 pages without ever losing one's interest. It is the reviewer's task, nevertheless, to explore the points where paths not taken might have proved an equally stimulating route. *Banking on Death* provides a striking historical background to the modern debate, distinguishing a 'puritan' private-insurance tradition in Britain, North America and the Netherlands, and a 'baroque' one of state provision that developed in France, Spain and Germany, initially in the form of military pensions; the radical if unrealized proposals floated during the French Revolution are given more attention than usual. This temporal depth is balanced by a broad spatial view of twentieth-century developments that flanks the central North Atlantic scene with East Asian snapshots, a concentrated summary of Communist Eurasia and a glance at Latin America.

The elegant results are more than sufficient for the contemporary analysis and critique that is Blackburn's main objective. Yet the focus on politics and economics in this historical chapter, as in the more contemporary sections, means that he pays little attention to sociological and class aspects of pension systems—which, of course, also express, and buttress, patterns of social relations. Bismarck's social-insurance system—initiated after the shock of one of his chief advisers, Hermann Wegener, at the Communards' insurrection, which he had witnessed with the German troops of siege—was careful to separate schemes for manual industrial workers from those of white-collar employees, while ruling out agricultural labourers and domestics altogether. The exclusion catered to the interests of the landowner and the servant-keeping urban base of the regime, while keeping the working class divided. The Bismarckian pensions system issued from, and helped to fortify, a continental European class system that maintained its strength and political importance until de-industrialization began to weaken the working class in a different way. Similarly the self-employed, farmers and others, kept themselves apart—as they were encouraged to do—from employees' social-insurance schemes. A combination of state clientelism and forceful interest-group struggles led to a patchwork of *régimes spéciaux*, particularly in Latin Europe and Latin America, with very generous, specific entitlements for delimited groups. General social-policy demands could not become class issues under such circumstances, as the most resourceful fractions already had their demands satisfied. The result was pockets of relatively expensive schemes and gaping holes of poverty. That neoliberal attacks on these special

entitlements have been met by class-wide defensive mobilizations—most dramatically in France, in December 1995, but continuing to this day—demonstrates a remarkable dynamic of class solidarity, which one would have liked Blackburn to analyse more closely.

The extreme misery of the British pensions system—at least by northern and central European standards—can be explained by a number of factors: the deep skill divisions of the British working class; the fragmentation of its trade-union tradition; the strength of the country's financial institutions; the quaintness of its administration; a crucial re-founding error in enthroning flat-rate-ism and the contingent outcomes of its politics in the sixties and seventies. That American class solidarity and force could not extend beyond the industry-wide pension funds won by miners, auto workers and other industrial unions in the postwar struggles is easier to understand. But in both cases it would, again, have been enlightening to have a broad sociological analysis of the class politics involved, to complement the author's neo-institutionalist sensitivity. Blackburn is, of course, aware of the relationship between social insurance and social cohesion; but their patterns are given little space in his framework.

The *Pinochetista* Chilean pension system, designed by the Harvard-educated economist and Minister of Labour and Social Affairs José Piñera, was intended to make formal-sector workers feel like individual proprietors—without any social ties, even to their employers; they would be connected to society only through the supposed harmony of markets. Their future pensions would depend entirely on the fortunes of their mandated savings accounts, within a chosen fund. As José Piñera has described, symbolism played an important role in this cats' cradle of neoliberal modernization and military force. All members of the pension scheme received their own account book, or *libreta*, as tangible manifestation of their individual status. The plan was announced to begin on May Day, 1981.

The Swedish experience was the exact opposite of Latin and Anglo-Saxon fragmentation—or Teutonic division. Bismarck's social-insurance policies led to the creation of a Royal Commission in Sweden: the Workers' Insurance Committee. Although no legislation flowed directly from its labours, its 1888 report—one of the world's first empirical class analyses—set the framework for the country's entire twentieth-century social policy debate. The Committee had been charged with the task of investigating the needs of social insurance for workers and 'persons comparable to them'. It came to the conclusion that 94.25 per cent of the Swedish population fell into these two categories, thereby including the whole farm population as well as the tiny white-collar stratum. While Sweden at the time was certainly not a 'small farmers and workers' society' but an emergent, conflictual industrial social order ruled by a pre-democratic administrative elite,

the class analysis thus produced was not just the calculation of a maverick statistician. The Committee's mandate to examine the social situation not only of workers but of 'comparable persons' had been added at the insistence of the large Yeoman Party and its conclusions were unanimously endorsed. The same analysis re-surfaced in the Liberal government's pension bill of 1913, which proposed that all but a few per cent of the very rich be covered by a modest social insurance. In the parliamentary debate that followed, a majority became convinced that the exclusion of the 'very rich' would be unnecessarily complicated and costly. That same year, the Swedish Diet adopted a 'people's pension' for all.

The core of Blackburn's book is a set of chapters analysing the political economy of contemporary Anglo-Saxon pension capitalism. They explore the details of transatlantic fund management with impressive insight and grasp, illuminating its lacklustre performance, powerful economic clout and accountability deficits, while emphasizing the paradoxically ill-defined property rights of the pensions system. Blackburn's enquiry into the mechanics of 'equity culture' points up the weakness of industrial performance and working-class earnings that lay behind the expansion driven by America's research universities and military spending. The Washington-led onslaught against public pensions, and drive for private savings schemes, is allotted one chapter, centred on the World Bank report but also taking in a global panorama that includes Chile as the Bank's model. There follow two chapters that record and discuss recent British and American proposals—in impressive detail and with patient good-humour, even the pugnacious Martin Feldstein is fairly and respectfully presented, if not agreed with. There is, to my knowledge, no equivalent contemporary history of the political economy of Anglo-Saxon pension capitalism.

Banking on Death ends with Blackburn's proposals for 'good pensions and responsible accumulation' which envision, as described above, a two-pillared system: one a tax-based state pension, the other sourced by a wide variety of publicly regulated, socially accountable funds; together they would replace at least 70 per cent of previous earnings. Blackburn's scheme, and the arguments for it, start from the existing institutional landscape of the Anglo-Saxon world; his recommendations are largely concentrated on the supply of funds and the new rules of management and investment to which these should be subjected. In times like this, when new radical proposals have become an endangered species, Blackburn's effort must be warmly welcomed.

Nevertheless, something is missing. This becomes apparent when one sets the World Bank report beside Blackburn's book—and, particularly, his final policy outline. Although it ends with a vista of the gradual 'socialization of capital' and a re-affirmation of the author's life-long political commitment, the chapter is predominantly technical. It is the voice of a progressive

professional addressing a readership of economists, economic journalists and reform-prone fund managers. The tone of the World Bank report's authors was very different: 'The costs of a transition from one system of old-age security to another are large, and resistance is likely to be strong'. Like Blackburn, they started from existing institutions; unlike him, they lay out a demolition plan. Page 261 of *Averting the Old Age Crisis* informs us that: 'The first step is to reform the public pillar by raising the retirement age, eliminating rewards for early retirement . . . downsizing benefit levels . . . and making the benefit structure flatter. The second step is to launch the private pillar'. Page 261 further explains that: 'The groundwork must be laid by an extensive public information campaign to bring expectations into line with the reality that the old promises are bad for the economy and impossible to keep . . . [to make] sure that workers understand the full cost of the current programme'.

Lacking Blackburn's familiarity with both the American and British systems, and being in basic agreement with his strategy of starting from the institutions in place, I do not have a concrete alternative to offer. However, from the outside it does seem more promising to start from the deficiencies of the Anglo-Saxon institutions, to today's retirees as well as tomorrow's. Half or more of British and American employees are not covered by a secondary pension, and the British state pensions are the meanest in Europe. Hundreds of thousands, over the past decade or so, have lost their pensions to corporate robbers and con men; many others, as Blackburn shows, have barely sufficient entitlements to survive. How many poor British pensioners are liable to freeze to death this coming winter, as they did in the early 1990s, I do not know. But it is clear (see Table opposite) that the current Anglo-Saxon mess of public and private pensions combined provide among the worst old-age security in the rich world.

In terms of relative old-age poverty, Australia, Britain and the us are in a class of their own. Among the countries of the Luxembourg study—which excludes Japan, Greece and Portugal, but includes most of Eastern Europe plus Taiwan, Mexico and Israel—only the Mexicans and the Israelis, with 20–23 per cent very poor, are clearly worse than the Anglo-Saxons (Canada excepted). Taiwan falls in between Britain and the us; Russia is comparable to Britain. The Irish leave only 3 per cent of their old people in dire poverty; but, as in the us, around a quarter are indubitably 'poor'. What, then, should be the first step towards genuinely eliminating old-age poverty and insecurity? And the second step, and the third? Given that 'resistance is likely to be strong', some more political thinking seems to be called for.

In between the wars that have provided the drum-beat of the last decade, pensions—or, 'investing in life'—have become a crucial issue of global as well as national political economy. By calling for a 'Maastricht' pension pact

TABLE 1: *Relative poverty among the elderly*

		Per cent very poor	Per cent poor
Australia	1994	12.4	29.4
Austria	1995	6.9	10.3
Belgium	1997	3.7	11.7
Canada	1998	1.7	7.8
Denmark	1997	1.7	6.6
Finland	2000	1.1	8.5
France	1994	3.4	9.8
Germany	1994	4.0	7.0
Italy	1995	4.5	12.2
Netherlands	1994	3.3	6.4
Norway	1995	0.7	14.5
Spain	1990	3.9	11.3
Sweden	1995	1.5	6.4
Switzerland	1992	4.7	8.4
UK	1999	10.2	20.9
US	2000	15.0	24.7

Disposable income, after taxes and transfers, among over 64-year-olds, as less than 40 per cent ('very poor') and less than half ('poor') of the median income of the national population, corrected for household size. Latest available year. Source: Luxembourg Income Study. Available at www.lisproject.org/keyfigures/povertytable.

in which the miserly British system is the model to be imposed, Berlusconi is sounding the bugle for a social war in Europe. Whether that crusade will come off remains to be seen. But there can be no doubt that the ageing of the world, and of Europe and Japan in particular, will continue; that with it issues of old-age security, dignity and care will gather salience; that the huge pension funds, shrouded in their legal and economic twilight, will remain a major feature of global capitalism; and that the financial lobbies will go on campaigning for more of other people's money to 'manage'. In these stormy waters and under darkening skies, *Banking on Death* stands like a lighthouse, providing a beam of orientation on a solid rock of research.

Goran Therborn is co-director of the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences, and author of *European Modernity and Beyond* (1995).

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Walden Bello, *Deglobalization: Ideas for a New World Economy*
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TOM MERTES

SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT

The advent of the Bush Administration has seen a peculiar mutation in the debates around the world financial institutions, as centre-left economists, born-again European speculators and NGOs rush to defend, as admirably 'multilateral', instruments that have long served to forward the interests and primacy of us capital. That there are problems with the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organization is not denied; but greater transparency and accountability, more consultation, flexibility and sensitivity to the environment and other 'public goods' could help transform them into beneficial agencies for more redistributive economic growth.

In his new book, *Deglobalization*, Walden Bello steadfastly refuses such placebos. A leading activist in the movement against corporate globalization and co-founder of Focus on the Global South, Bello has devoted the past two decades to analysing the workings of contemporary capitalism, focusing on the role of the us and international institutions in imposing the will of the North on the developing world. Though the Left generally devoted little attention to capitalist financial institutions during the Cold War, Bello's interest in them dates back to the mid-70s, when he began to investigate the role of World Bank loans in propping up the Marcos regime. Since then, his work has proceeded along a dual track, combining active opposition to us imperialism in his native Philippines with keen-eyed scrutiny of the activities of the World Bank and IMF across the Third World. Here he at once synthesizes and builds on previous work, mounting a sustained critique of the system presided over by the us Treasury, IMF, World Bank and WTO, before proposing his own alternatives. Bello's analyses and suggestions for action are refreshingly clear and direct, and he gives a valuable

account of the re-subordination of the South over the last quarter-century. *Deglobalization* is to be recommended above all for the invigorating energy with which it sets out an oppositional agenda.

Bello opens with a sketch of the global conjuncture, in which he argues that the current world order faces 'six intersecting crises of legitimacy.' The multilateral system through which the US secured its dominant position after the Cold War has been seriously undermined by the Bush Administration's frequent resort to unilateralism. In the wake of the Asian Crisis and Argentinean collapse, meanwhile, the wisdom of neoliberal policies has been called into question in an unprecedented range of sectors. Revelations of fraud at Enron and elsewhere have led to widespread criticism of the corporation, the driving force and main beneficiary of globalization. Beneath these short-term developments lie three more potential sources of instability, rooted in longer-term trends: the hollowing-out of liberal democracy; the US's increasing use of military force to maintain its supremacy since the end of the Cold War; and the descent of the world economy into depression, unable to escape the crisis of profitability. Global capitalism, Bello argues, currently faces a number of problems and uncertainties, signalling an opportunity for progressive forces to set out an alternative vision for a democratic, equitable and sustainable world order.

Bello gives a brisk account of the changing fortunes of the post-colonial world—the 'global South'—within the international economic order put in place at the Bretton Woods Conference. During the post-war boom, and with the great powers focused on the strategic imperatives of the Cold War, the newly independent states of the developing world were afforded an unprecedented degree of latitude to pursue state-centred development policies, supported by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The Argentine economist Raul Prebisch, UNCTAD's first director, proposed a series of measures to counter the subordination of South to North—commodity price floors, preferential tariffs for Third World goods, an increase in 'foreign assistance' that would be viewed as compensation rather than predatory loans—which saw a period of distinct industrial growth in many parts of the South, however skewed or 'dependent' such development may have been. As Bello points out, even at the supposed apogee of UNCTAD's influence, proposals for a Special UN Development Fund met with stiff resistance. Instead, in 1960 the International Development Association was set up under the auspices of the World Bank, with the UN left to hand out crumbs of technical assistance through the UNDP.

The mid-1970s saw a definitive shift in North–South relations, marking the start of a Northern offensive to claw back the few gains made by Southern elites in the preceding decades. The era of floating exchange rates inaugurated by US abandonment of the gold standard in 1973 led to

increasing instabilities in the Third World, with many states spiralling into debt peonage. The Third World debt crisis of 1982 provided the us with an opportunity to pry open Southern markets and dismantle local state capitalism for the benefit of its corporations. UNCTAD was marginalized: the us beat down calls for debt cancellation and other stimulation programmes at UNCTAD's 1983 meeting in Belgrade, and by the early 90s had deprived it of any say in the workings of GATT—a loose set of trade agreements that came into being in 1947 after the us blocked plans for an International Trade Organization, intended as the 'third pillar' of the Bretton Woods system. Via the 'structural adjustment programmes' and loan conditions of the IMF and World Bank, the us imposed the neoliberal policies of what became known as the Washington Consensus. Ironically, the ailing us economy was aided by excessive borrowing in the world bond market at the expense of the Third World—which, in turn, enabled the IMF and World Bank to implement a new round of structural adjustment policies. By the late 80s, over 70 Third World countries were under IMF and World Bank discipline.

Clinton and Rubin put the final touches to the current global economic architecture in 1995, with the creation of the WTO. The impetus for its establishment stemmed from us recognition that its advantage over the Asian 'tiger' economies would best be preserved by 'free trade', and by a system with stronger enforcement mechanisms than those of GATT. Once in place, the WTO effectively closed the neoliberal circle, with prospective members required to have favourable reports from the IMF and World Bank prior to joining. It was soon able to press deeply disadvantageous trade agreements on economies already pried open by the policies of the World Bank and IMF: TRIMS brought an end to local-content policies; TRIPS enshrined the intellectual property rights of Northern multinationals; and the Agreement on Agriculture opened Southern markets to heavily subsidized produce from the North. No such concessions were wrung from the developed world: as Bello observes, 'the level of overall subsidization of agriculture in the OECD countries rose from \$182 billion in 1995 when the WTO was born, to \$280 billion in 1997, to \$362 billion in 1998'. The us has also found the WTO an indispensable political tool, dangling offers of membership before Russian and now Chinese elites as an inducement to part ways with their respective popular classes.

Bello succinctly sets out the formal and informal mechanisms by which the South is excluded from the decision-making processes of the multi-lateral institutions. With 17.6 per cent of votes in the World Bank and 19 per cent in the IMF, the us retains the power of veto over lending decisions; developed countries as a whole can block any decision requiring a majority. But votes are rarely taken in the IMF, which tends to operate via a consensus that has in practice served almost solely to advance the interests of the

us. Bello does not overlook the influence of the location and staffing of these bodies—both Washington-based, with overwhelmingly us-educated personnel—on their ideology and institutional culture. Though located on Swiss soil and portrayed by its advocates as a one-member-one-vote system like the UN General Assembly, the wro is likewise dominated by an ideology of American manufacture, and operates by a similarly murky procedure: decisions are arrived at in ‘Green Room’ meetings of around twenty-five countries, the agenda and composition of which are decided largely by representatives of the us, eu, Japan and Canada.

Bello gives a good account of the IMF’s ineptitude at the time of the 1997–98 Asian Crisis and Russian meltdown, which in 1998 prompted the us Congress to set up a commission, under the chairmanship of neo-conservative economist Allan Meltzer, to investigate the role of the international institutions. Its report, delivered in March 2000, made the most of the easy targets offered, noting, for instance, that over two-thirds of World Bank loans went to only eleven countries, none of which were the poorest, but all of which were on cordial terms with the State Department. Though loans to the poorest countries had a high default record, grants were never considered. The Bank’s mantra of promoting ‘good governance’ and its environmental proscriptions were, meanwhile, revealed as mere window-dressing by loans of over \$30 billion to the Suharto regime on the one hand, and on the other, fulsome support for projects such as the Chad–Cameroon pipeline.

By the late 90s, movements against neoliberalism had sprung up from Cochabamba to Soweto to Papua New Guinea. But of far more pressing concern to the global elite was the debacle of the Washington Consensus in Latin America—the Argentinean collapse the most striking of a series of reversals for neoliberalism that had encompassed Brazil, the subcontinent’s most populous country, and Venezuela, one of its key oil producers. Centrists rushed to shore up the existing order, including figures such as Joseph Stiglitz, the former World Bank employee who urges greater transparency and accountability in the IMF. There should, Stiglitz reasons, be more consultation with developing countries before punitive structural adjustment plans are imposed on them; the developed world should perhaps be a little more flexible in the pursuit of free trade and capital account liberalization. Moreover, Stiglitz argues for greater emphasis to be placed on the implantation of healthy liberal institutions, prior to the dismemberment of the state sector—a proviso now shared by others, such as Jeffrey Sachs, as a *mea culpa* for assisting the oligarchs’ spree in Russia. Further suggestions for the reform and stabilization of the present system—what Bello terms the ‘Back-to-the-Bretton-Woods School’—include the Tobin Tax and the establishment

of regional institutions, such as the Asian Monetary Fund floated by the Japanese in response to the Asian Crisis.

Not to be outdone, George Soros has put forward self-serving proposals that appeal to a similar impulse to rescue capitalism by means of cosmetic adjustments to the status quo. Existing international organizations devoted to 'public goods', such as the ILO and environmental agencies, should be strengthened, suggests Soros. But they would be given no regulatory or coercive power—his countervailing regime could extract no more than 'voluntary compliance'. James Wolfensohn at the World Bank, meanwhile, should simply be given more time to do his best for the world's poor. Finally, Soros recommends the current aid system be scrapped in favour of 'Special Drawing Rights' to be administered by the IMF—signalling not so much a loosening of the North's stranglehold on the South as a change of rope.

Forces on the Right advocated a more serious overhaul of the international institutions, but brushed aside any notion of making them more democratic. One suggestion called for the creation of an Economic Security Council, parallel to the UNSC, which would harmonize the 'goals, roles and mandates' of the IMF, World Bank and WTO, and dispense with UNCTAD and the UN Industrial Development Organization. The idea found support neither in the North—it would only dilute the power of structures already in the steady grip of Washington and its developed-nation allies—nor the South, since it would reduce what limited input they had. The Meltzer Report, which has a measure of credibility with the Bush administration, suggests Northern control of the World Bank and IMF should be maintained, but that their size and role be pared back. The latter would be reduced to a lender of last resort to states suffering a crisis of liquidity—a proposal made despite the Report's own conclusion that the IMF had failed miserably at precisely this function. The Report also insisted loans should only be provided to nations with open capital markets—exacerbating the problem the loans were supposed to rectify, as well as undermining the sovereignty of the debtor nation, an action of which the Report had itself accused the IMF. The functions of the World Bank, meanwhile, were to be devolved to regional development banks, and the World Bank would become a grant-issuing World Development Authority. But as Bello points out, both the proposed WDA and regional banks would retain the ideology and structural imbalance between North and South that characterized the parent organization—resulting in the same policies and their destructive consequences.

Having laid out the alternatives offered by various wings of the establishment, Bello makes his own recommendations. Deploying the tropes of Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Bello eschews piecemeal, Ptolemaic reforms that would leave the overarching international economic order intact, promoting instead a Copernican revolution—the dismantling

of these institutions. The IMF, Bello argues, should be transformed into a research organization that documents capital flows and exchange rate fluctuations, but has no capacity to make loans or dictate policy; likewise, the World Bank should be shorn of its loan-making powers and devolve the disbursement of grants to regional institutions whose policies are formed in a democratic, participatory fashion. The method Bello proposes for neutering the IMF and World Bank is to attack their lifeblood: 'boycott World Bank bonds, deny new appropriations for the International Development Association (IDA), and oppose calls for quota increases for the IMF.'

But for Bello, the more immediate and important target is the WTO, and it is here that his tactical prescriptions are overwhelmingly concentrated. He identifies as its Achilles heel the 'consensus' process by which decisions are made, suggesting activists focus their energies on derailing the Fifth Ministerial Meeting in Cancún later this year. In order to roll back the tide of liberalization, its momentum must first be halted by ensuring no new agreements are signed. Possible tactics include exacerbating conflict between the US and EU; working with Southern delegations to resist any negotiations on tariffs, investment, trade facilitation, competition policy or government procurement; redirecting discussions away from further trade agreements and towards the implementation of existing WTO policies; grassroots mobilizations to put pressure on individual governments; and global mass actions at WTO meetings themselves, in Geneva and Cancún.

In his proposals for a more equitable international economic order, Bello takes his cue from Polanyi, arguing that our efforts should be directed at 're-embedding the economy in society, rather than having society driven by the economy.' The key to this process lies in 'a double movement of "deglobalization" of the national economy and the construction of "a pluralist system of global economic governance".' The former envisions economies oriented towards local production rather than export; indigenous capital investment; redistribution of land and income; democratic participation and accountability in economic policy-making; civil society monitoring of both state and private sector; the promotion of cooperative and state enterprises; and 'enshrining the principle of subsidiarity in economic life.' This is an ambitious agenda, but its components have been tested in many parts of the world—participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre; the sustainable eco-community at Gaviotas in Colombia; fair trade between Northern consumers and Southern farmers; micro-currencies in Thailand.

But Bello is hard-headed enough to see that these proposals will continue to meet with stiff resistance from the prevailing order. Hence his call for an alternative 'system of global governance'—not a single set of inflexible global rules, since this would merely reproduce the iniquities of the present system, but a decentralized, pluralistic set of arrangements. On the

international plane, the vastly weakened Bretton Woods institutions Bello envisages would be counterbalanced by greatly strengthening bodies such as UNCTAD and the ILO and increasing the scope and power of multilateral agreements. Regional blocs are a second vital component of Bello's vision, but the models here are not the EU, ASEAN and Mercosur, which have consistently advanced the interests of local elites; instead, he proposes economic associations formed by democratic momentum from below, involving not only governments and the private sector but also social movements and civil society organizations. These regional blocs would incorporate mechanisms for sharing technology, capital and income to prevent the entrenchment of inequalities among their members. The aim, even within such multi-state arrangements, would be to devolve economic decision-making to the level of communities, and ensure the highest possible degree of democratic participation and economic autonomy. Bello also proposes the establishment of an international body to protect the numerous indigenous economies in many parts of the world that already operate on similar principles.

Throughout *Deglobalization*, Bello's primary analytical focus is on international institutions, and so it is understandable that these should be the first targets of his proposed offensive. But others have argued that the policies of the IMF, World Bank and WTO merely signal a much deeper trend towards privatization and commodification, and that it is this underlying shift, as well as the structures through which it has been implemented, that needs to be addressed. Movements as diverse as the Sem Terra in Brazil, the Anti-Privatization Forum in South Africa and the Coordinadora del Agua y de la Vida in Bolivia have agitated for measures, such as those advocated by Naomi Klein and Patrick Bond, that would reverse the destruction of the 'commons' by returning water, electricity, genetic materials, grazing or uncultivated lands to public stewardship. Bello—perhaps for reasons of space—has surprisingly little to say about how to roll back the tide of privatizations, or how to reclaim from corporations what they have plundered from the public domain.

A number of questions could be raised about Bello's opening assertion of an impending crisis of stability in world capitalism—most of them centred on the extent to which Bello overstates the severity of the crisis, and the degree to which the legitimacy of the present order has been cast into doubt. The IMF, World Bank and WTO have, after all, emerged unchanged from a series of debacles; the US's military dominance remains unchallenged; and corporations continue to lead the march of commodification around the globe. While Bello's view of the condition of the present system is open to debate, his historical critique also leaves several issues unaddressed. There is little sense here, for instance, of the differing character of various post-colonial and Third World states—broadly representative, authoritarian or

otherwise—and consequently little indication as to the obstacles that might lie on the path towards redistribution. Can we really expect states to side with popular classes at the expense of their national bourgeoisies? Bello's proposals might strengthen the hand of workers and peasants, but will they transform the state apparatus? Bello also underplays the problem of interstate relations in the capitalist world—for instance, how far will Japan and China be willing to cooperate in regional economic arrangements? What is the role of the UN in his alternative system of global governance? Is there any guarantee the world's peoples will be better represented by the new regional and international institutions he proposes than by their predecessors? Bello also doesn't address the issue of reparations, to be paid in recognition of the economic legacy of colonialism, and provides few clues as to how the weaker states of the South are to resist the depredations of the First World in the present.

During his narrative of the marginalization of the South, Bello consistently emphasizes the coercive means by which Northern domination has been secured. Yet these are strangely absent from his blueprint for an alternative world order. His programme implies the de-linking of local and regional decision-making structures from direct US influence; but can such a decentralized system be brought into being against the wishes of the hegemon? Bello's trip to Baghdad in March to oppose the imminent US invasion suggests he is well aware of the element of force in the American imperium. His sharp analysis lays out the principles on which a radical alternative should be elaborated, and makes a significant contribution to debates as to what forms it should take. But his strategies for halting the momentum of corporate-driven globalization need to be complemented by an equally clear agenda for an assault on the political, military and economic tools by which US hegemony is maintained.

John Hoberman, *Darwin's Athletes: How Sport Has Damaged Black America and Preserved the Myth of Race*

Houghton Mifflin Company: New York, NY 1997, £24.95, hardback
341 pp, 0 395 82291 2

BENJAMIN MARKOVITS

THE COLOURS OF SPORT

I used to play basketball in Bavaria with a man born in the Ivory Coast. He had been adopted at the age of four by a white middle-class couple in Munich, both doctors. We fell in with each other naturally as a matter of class—we spoke the same kind of German (*hoch*) among other things, unlike the Croats, Slavs, Americans, Argentinians and small-town Bavarians who made up the rest of the squad. His schooldays were crazy, he said, on account of his mixed background. He used to get beaten up all the time for being black, except at basketball, where the colour of his skin was hip, and classmates clamoured to play on his team. The part sport played in integrating his school was both concrete and of questionable value.

John Hoberman takes up that question on a number of levels. His book, *Darwin's Athletes*, is subtitled: 'How sport has damaged black America and preserved the myth of race'. There is nothing new about the claim of course, just as the opposite assertions are equally familiar. Jackie Robinson broke the colour barrier in baseball in 1946–47, and is generally held up as a pioneer of racial equality, especially by the African-American athletes who followed him to riches. Nearly thirty years later, Hank Aaron passed Babe Ruth's career mark for home runs. His memoir, *I Had A Hammer*, records the racial threats that plagued his joyless quest to eclipse the great white Yankee, and describes the moment he knocked the record-breaking ball out of the park and trotted round the bases. A white fan leaped from the stands as he rounded second—to congratulate him as it turned out, though Aaron's flinch was visible, his shoulder hunched against an assault—and he didn't look round again as he came home. Since then in almost every American sport, including golf and tennis, black athletes have become marketable

cultural figures: Tiger Woods is now worth \$330 million, Michael Jordan \$500 million. Black success, the argument goes, has been accepted in the ballpark at least.

Hoberman, who is white, contends that African-Americans' investment in athletic achievement has 'amount[ed] to a fixation that almost precludes criticism of its effects', and that the 'cult of the black athlete' has 'exacerbated the disastrous spread of anti-intellectual attitudes among African-American youth facing life in a knowledge-based society.' He writes: 'While it is assumed that sport has made an important contribution to racial integration, this has been counterbalanced by the merger of the athlete, the gangster rapper, and the criminal into a single black male persona that the sports industry, the music industry, and the advertising industry have made into the predominant image of black masculinity in the United States and around the world.' He calls his book 'a place to begin' any discussion of this development, rather than a solution to it. His aims are mainly historical rather than scientific. They are threefold: to explore 'the origins of the African-American preoccupation with athletic achievement', which 'has subverted more productive developmental strategies founded on academic and professional' success; to examine the 'past century of sport as an arena of racial competition', in which 'the ascendancy of the black athlete and the growing belief in his biological superiority' have reversed the historical roles of Western and African encounters and contributed to a 'more comprehensive racial folklore'; and finally, to open the door for a 'postliberal' investigation into 'biomedical racial difference'.

Hoberman argues that 'traumatic aspects of the African-American experience have prompted black people to regard athletic proficiency as a comprehensive representation of all proficiencies, including intellectual skills.' Part of the bleakness of the book lies in its occasional suggestions that his account might have taken a different course. 'The special preoccupation with athletics that characterizes African-American life today did not exist a century ago.' Around the turn of the last century, the black mathematician Kelly Miller 'found it necessary to refute the widespread idea that the black race was physically deteriorating'; and W. E. B. Du Bois lamented 'the poor physical fitness of Negro youth' in 1897. Du Bois also deplored Booker T. Washington's advocacy of an 'industrial education' for African-Americans over more independent disciplines: 'There is among educated and thoughtful coloured men in all parts of the land a feeling of deep regret, sorrow, and apprehension at the wide currency and ascendancy which some of Mr. Washington's theories have gained.' Three decades later a black professor from Virginia, Arthur Davis complained in the NAACP's magazine *The Crisis*, of the 'shibboleth of practicality' that 'circumscribed' the mind of the Negro student, and denounced 'the "pragmatic" field of educational

psychology' as a 'pseudo-discipline' as 'pernicious as the old "trade-school" conception of Negro education'. Hoberman quotes Ralph Ellison's belief that 'the pre-individualistic black community discourages individuality out of self-defence. Having learned through experience that the whole group is punished for the actions of the single member, it has worked out efficient techniques of behaviour control.' And he cites the ethnologist Carl Husemoller Nightingale's claim that 'experts on inner-city family life have sometimes been tempted to understate the importance of corporal punishment in poor African-American families, often for understandable reasons.' In response to the continuing exclusion of African-Americans from other realms of achievement, black intellectuals have emphasized the physical creativity and originality of the athletes. As Joe Louis once said, 'I do all my talking with my two fists'.

Hoberman's synthetic account argues that conflicting historical versions of black physicality belong to a single phenomenon in its various mutations, rather than to opposing sides of an ongoing argument being won by increasing egalitarianism. He traces these contradictory responses back to the first colonial encounters with African men who were alternately seen as weak, strong; primitive, unnaturally developed; cowardly, fearless; cunning, stupid. There is an old joke about what to call a white man surrounded by five blacks—Coach. The point is obvious: racist institutions find new and often subtler means of perpetuating their racist distinctions. Once black athletes had been admitted to the playing field, their equality was denied in other ways. Isiah Thomas, a black point guard for the Detroit Pistons, complained that the success of the white Larry Bird was used to perpetuate black stereotypes:

When Bird makes a great play, it's due to his thinking, and his work habits. It's all planned out by him. It's not the case for blacks. All we do is run and jump. We never practise or give a thought to how we play. It's like I came dribbling out of my mother's womb.

Similar prejudices, or rather their corollaries—that the 'natural' athleticism of blacks compensates for their intellectual inferiority, a notion inherited from colonial estimations of African character and discipline—have kept black sportsmen out of athletic leadership roles: the quarterback position in American football, the midfield in soccer.

Such stereotypes are complicated by the fact that some versions of them are shared by black athletes and intellectuals. The choreographer Alvin Ailey refers to 'the rubato [rhythmic flexibility] of the black body'. A black educator addressing the diagnosis of hyperactivity among black children remarks that 'black males ought not be labelled as hyperactive when that activity is a part of their motor skills development, and in some cases their self-expression.'

Hoberman adds that 'the widespread use of stimulants such as Ritalin to treat this condition . . . was and continues to be seen by some black observers as a white strategy to suppress the development of black children by pacifying them.' The question of race makes strange bedfellows. Charles Murray and Richard J. Herrnstein, authors of *The Bell Curve* 'gladly endorse the view of one Wade Boykin . . . that movement, rhythm, music, and dance belong to "that mix of qualities that makes the American black clan unique and (appropriately in the eyes of the clan) superior".' Of course, much of Hoberman's evidence takes the form of a kind of hearsay; but his general argument sounds plausible: the mainstream success of black musicians and athletes is too great a source of cultural pride for the culture itself to challenge the myth of 'natural' black creativity their achievements perpetuate. As Hoberman points out: 'blacks who flirt with the often hazy boundary between culture and biology should not be surprised when their findings are endorsed by white supremacists.'

He addresses the various myths that account for black physical superiority, often credited by blacks and whites alike: that nineteenth-century slave traders picked the finest physical specimens from Africa; that the brutal rigours of the Middle Passage weeded out the weakest, effectively speeding up the process of Darwinian evolution; that slave owners bred their 'property' for physical qualities. There are pseudo-biological equivalents to these historical explanations, involving glands, hormones, muscle-fibres (distinguished according to the species of 'twitch' they produce). 'The idea of black biological inferiority reminds us that the trauma of slavery and racial oppression has been interpreted in two contradictory ways, as either weakening or strengthening the African-American population, and that adherence to these competing viewpoints has divided along racial lines.' The insidious appeal of bioracial accounts is striking; they persuade a number of people who should know better, and often, as Hoberman illustrates, *did* know better when confronted with particulars. The physical anthropologist William Montague Cobb—the only African-American to hold a doctorate in his subject prior to 1950—analysed the anatomical characteristics of the great sprinter Jesse Owens according to the contemporary accounts of racial difference that explained black athletic superiority. He concluded that 'in all those characters presumptively associated with race or physical ability, Owens was Caucasoid rather than Negroid in type. Thus his heel bone was relatively short, instead of long; his calf muscles had very long instead of short bellies; and his arches were high and strong instead of being low and weak.' Yet these facts did nothing to undermine his belief in the biological accounts of African-American athletic superiority. 'How else can one explain the fact that in the few short years since competition in professional sports has been open, Negroes have risen to dominant positions in every

field?' A difficult question, that lies behind much of the speculation on the subject. Cobb himself credited the eugenic effects of the ordeal of slavery, and the infusion of 'white genes . . . from the privileged upper levels' of American society.

There seem to be few historical grounds for any such explanations: no evidence that slave-traders selected for certain physical qualities; or that slave-owners sexually matched their slaves; no reason to think natural selection, operating over the course of the Middle Passage, can have had any significant evolutionary effect. But Hoberman remains an agnostic regarding biomedical accounts of racial difference. The book never makes clear what exactly he means by 'black' and 'white', presumably because he intends popular rather than biological or anthropological interpretations of the categories, though he does address the latter towards the end: 'In fact, medical interest in biological racial differences is an important restraint on the view propounded by many anthropologists that race is not a scientifically meaningful category'. And he refers tentatively to the conclusions of what he calls 'the purely clinical' scientists investigating biomedical differences:

[They have] reported that black men have higher levels of both testosterone and human growth hormone than white men. This research was undertaken to help account for the fact that African-American men have the world's highest rate of prostate cancer, a rate that is almost double that of white American men. A significant difference in testosterone levels could be athletically significant, in that testosterone is known to promote the growth of lean muscle mass, hence the illicit use by many athletes of the synthetic testosterone compounds known as anabolic-androgenic steroids. Growth hormone (GH) has similar effects: 'The anabolic effects of GH increase both muscle mass and strength, which has a consequent effect on the skeleton.' In other words, a significant difference in growth hormone levels is interesting because of the established racial difference in bone density, which differential growth hormone levels may promote. 'American (and many African) blacks have larger, denser bones than do whites and Asians. Why? Blacks reach and maintain this difference despite lactase nonpersistence and a calcium intake that is substantially lower than that of whites, at least in the United States.' Denser bones are of potential importance to athletic performance because bone density may be positively correlated with muscle mass. All in all, this highly suggestive information seems to indicate a black athletic advantage, although scientific confirmation remains tantalizingly vague.

There are two obvious problems with such evidence. First, biomedical and cultural factors are hard to disentangle; and second, in the hands of less 'clinical' scientists such analyses form the prologue to more ambitious theories of 'hormonal effects and the racial character traits to which they supposedly contribute'. For hormonal theorists Ellis and Nyborg 'average racial/ethnic differences in testosterone levels may not only help to explain

group variations in disease, but could also be relevant to group difference in behaviour patterns.' Racial theorists reason lightly from imperfect genetic evidence to their supposed social manifestations. 'All we know', according to Hoberman, 'is that "blacks make denser bone to ensure that ordinary use produces less bending", but how and why this adaptation occurred is unknown.' Yet speculation seldom stops short at the unknown: 'The evolutionary model appeals to us all on such a deep level that it is almost impregnable to critical thinking'.

In spite of this tendency (or because of it) Hoberman calls for more rather than less scientific investigation into biomedical racial differentiation. He vigorously attacks the 'powerful and generally unspoken assumption . . . that human biologists are hiding a terrible truth about racial difference' and the consequent 'disinclination to believe that . . . research might confirm not only the diversity but also the unity of the human species'. Ronald Walters suggests that 'there are types of research that shouldn't be done.' Hoberman argues convincingly that such a failure of intellectual curiosity leaves too much of the field to the 'hard science wielded so clumsily by the racial right'. The dominance of black athletes has produced a culture of silent assumptions about physical racial differences, though Hoberman rightly points out that nobody seems to trouble about the sports traditionally still won by whites. The presumption, in their case at least, is that cultural factors pertain; why these should not equally apply elsewhere is another question. The Berkeley molecular anthropologist Vincent Sarich declared that 'if you can believe that individuals of recent African ancestry are not genetically advantaged over those of European and Asian ancestry in certain athletic endeavours then you could probably be led to believe just about anything'. Without clinical scientific inquiry, people of varying political persuasions *do* seem to believe 'just about anything' and the pseudo-scientific bluster of the racist right can be met only by liberal silence.

The trouble, it seems, is that both sides wield the science clumsily. Too little is known about the psychological and biomechanical factors that determine sporting success for useful conclusions to be drawn. I am not sure that athletic excellence is a good place to start asking questions. Athletes tend to prove the exception rather than the rule, even within their own cultures. They are studied, presumably, both because sport seems an obvious and public arena for observing racial capacities, and because any biomedical analysis of the average adult would lose its way among the cultural factors that apply. Why the second consideration does not also invalidate the first has never been adequately addressed. Indeed, when the South African physiologist Ernst Jökl ('one of several first-rate Jewish sprinters competing in Weimar Germany', who emigrated in 1935) undertook a comparison of the physical skill, strength, and endurance of a racial cross-section of South

African children, he was impressed by the 'similarity between the standards of physical performance found in the different racial groups', and concluded that 'no more impressive evidence for the basic equality of man has ever been adduced'. Typically, however, these findings did not dissuade him from a subsequent belief in the 'innate capacity' of the black athlete, though he distinguished it from 'innate ability'. The overwhelming dominance of the black athlete in certain disciplines seems, almost against the grain of reason, to confound our faith in nurture; our faith in nature follows shortly after.

What is most troubling, perhaps, is that the athletes themselves seem to be losing faith. As sociological rather than scientific evidence, Hoberman quotes a number of white athletes trying to come to grips with their marginalization in their sport. 'You have to be a realist' Scott Brooks, a white professional basketball player declares; 'white people can't jump as high'. Hoberman cites the extraordinary fact that in 1994 the Chinese sports establishment decided to concentrate on nurturing athletes in disciplines in which blacks tended not to compete. Tian Maijiu, vice president of the Beijing Institute of Physical Education, explained that 'black people have very good genetics. Compared with them, the people in Asia are very inferior.' A matter, it seems, of blood type and the elevation of the buttocks. The recent success of Yao Ming, the 7'5" centre for the Houston Rockets, may dispel some of these prejudices; the first Chinese man to play in the NBA finished second in basketball's prestigious Rookie of the Year competition. More significant still may be the part that global business plays. China is an enormous emerging market for American sports leagues, which have a great financial interest in fostering and promoting Chinese athletes. One might have hoped that the players themselves had a clearer sense of the talent and training that went into their accomplishments. Jumping ability, for example, is one of the skills that exercise can greatly develop; it may prove a question less of racial predisposition than cultural emphasis. The black Charles Barkley once explained his leaping ability as the product of the hours he spent in childhood jumping back and forth over his front yard fence. And yet the notion persists that black athletes, like poets, are born and that white athletes are made.

Hoberman himself is occasionally guilty of overstating the dominance he sets out to explain, and recent developments have at least complicated his argument: 'There is not a white star left in the National Basketball Association . . . and the idea of a white cornerback in today's NFL [National Football League] has become virtually unthinkable.' Both statements are now untrue. Jason Sehorn, the white cornerback of the New York Giants up until March 2003, is known for his natural athleticism. A white player, Brent Barry, recently won the NBA's annual slam dunk competition, the league's purest test of exuberant physical creativity. The influx of white

European stars into the American game has offered renewed evidence that athletes are produced by cultural and not racial excellence. And thoughtful black players have taken the occasion to dispel racial myths. After the end of the 2001 season, Chris Webber said of Turkish guard Hidayet Turkoglu, 'This summer I'm taking Hedo to the hood with me to play. By the end he'll be the god of my hood.' Of course, to an extent such claims perpetuate the stereotype—the white player's brilliance can only be viewed in the context of black athleticism. The point guard Jason Williams was dubbed White Chocolate to reflect what was seen as an element of African-American improvisation in his style. Again, the implication is that undisciplined 'natural' play is typically black; but such hybrids may belong to a transitional stage that will eventually dissolve rather than reinforce notions of racial differentiation.

These exceptions may seem insignificant, but they point to a more general weakness in the book. Hoberman's argument that contemporary images of black athleticism are born out of and reflect racist colonial myths of the African male is unanswerable, but there is a kind of tautology inherent in it. The fact that the one inevitably evolved out of the other does not necessarily mean we should condemn the evolution, a process which may take us farther towards egalitarianism than Hoberman foresaw. Indeed, the virtue of athletics as an arena for racial integration is that it offers a kind of objectivity that defies the perpetuation of inaccurate prejudices. The colour barrier in American sports may have been overwhelmed by the broader tide of the civil rights movement, but there is no doubt that a less honourable desire to win with the best talent at hand forced the breach. The beauty of sport is the simplicity of its objectives; prejudices inevitably persist and play their part, but they are more easily defeated in the playing field than elsewhere. It is true, for example, that even after integration black athletes were kept out of what were seen as leadership roles, positions involving character and intelligence. But that is changing, too. The pressure to win has forced coaches to play the best candidates for the job. Black quarterbacks are now commonplace in American football; just as black midfielders have become less rare in the English game. Even the coaches are changing colour. Though the percentage of blacks in managerial positions in American sports remains disgracefully low, it must surely have risen faster there than in other sectors of corporate America. The case of Tiger Woods is an interesting test of the kind of evolution Hoberman discusses. There is no doubt that some remnant of a racial myth has contributed to his dominance of what is still a white man's sport; but the form that myth has taken is worth examining. A recent *Guardian* article compared his natural gifts to those of Ernie Els, his nearest competitor in an upcoming tournament. Els's form was generally considered superior, but he lagged in the qualities that distinguished the

Stanford-educated Woods from the rest of the field: character, intelligence, discipline. It is hard to measure the effect of athletes like Woods on popular conceptions of racial types. It is also hard to measure the more practical significance of sport as a public arena that lures people to cross race lines and play together.

But nor can we gauge the damage done to an economically underprivileged subsection of American society by the prevalence of athletic role models. Chris Webber has complained that when white high schools bring in motivational speakers they choose lawyers and doctors; black high schools choose athletes like him—inconceivably gifted and rare, almost impossible to emulate. Hoberman, in spite of the claim in the title, makes no attempt to quantify the 'damage' sport has done to black America, aside from noting in the preface that 'twice as many black women as black men are pursuing degrees' and that 'the number of black men receiving PhDs is actually falling'. His interest lies in examining modern mutations of the early racial myths, not in discovering a way to measure the extent to which the African-American sports fixation has closed off other avenues towards economic and social influence. This would in any case be hard to do. The most disturbing aspect of these mutations is the extent to which they link explanations of black athletic success with an account of black criminality. Dr Frederick Goodwin, head of the Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration, declared in 1992 that the 'natural way of it' for male monkeys was to 'knock each other off . . . There are some interesting evolutionary implications of that because the same hyperaggressive monkeys who kill each other are also hypersexual, so they copulate more and therefore they reproduce more to offset the fact that half of them are dying'. He went on to argue, in Hoberman's words, that the 'black ghetto represented an untimely reversion . . . to a primitive and chaotic state of nature', and in his own, that 'it isn't just a careless use of the word when people call certain areas of certain cities jungles, that we may have gone back to what might be more natural, without all of the social controls [acquired] over thousands of years in our own evolution'. These comments could be seen as racist aberrations if they did not belong to such a broad history: in which criminal behaviour and athletic success have been connected by pseudo-biological accounts rooted in racial prejudice.

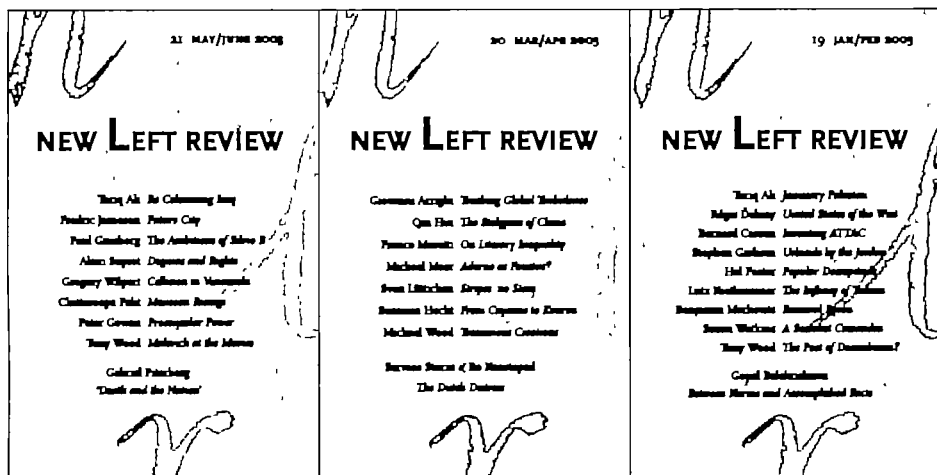
Hoberman for the most part handles a difficult subject delicately. But racial and cultural discussions have a way of tricking you into often contradictory kinds of errors. Hoberman's book has little to say either about anti-sport elements in African-American culture, or about the fact that athletic creativity represents only one strain of a tendency with countless intellectual incarnations (even according to the myth itself) in music, art or literature. To take an example less for its merit than the kinds of argument

that can be made about it: Hoberman cites the controversy in African-American circles over the prescription of Ritalin to hyperactive children, mentioned above, as evidence of the culture's readiness to gloss over behavioural problems as biomedically motivated. 'Left unresolved', Hoberman writes, 'were the origins of "active behavioral patterns", which are of concern to blacks and whites alike, and the consistent focus for this concern was the young and unruly black male'. True enough, but it is also possible that the educational culture with greater rather than less respect for the demands of physical creativity in young children will prove the wiser in this instance. What *Darwin's Athletics* demonstrates least equivocally is the history of a white fixation with racial difference and its athletic, intellectual and behavioural implications.

That history may be about to enter a new period. Hoberman quotes Marek Kohn, whose 1995 book *The Race Gallery* argues that 'scientific anti-racism is a doctrine belonging to a . . . phase which is now in its terminal stages.' It must 'renew itself as society develops'; this will prove impossible 'if the scientific dimensions of race cannot be discussed frankly'. The purpose of Hoberman's book is to offer heavily qualified support for this injunction. He has powerfully demonstrated the extent to which racist preconceptions light the way when science gropes towards an understanding of the biomedical roots of human behaviour and potential. But for liberal curiosity to draw back from such inquiries simply leaves the field to the 'racial right'. There is no reason to fear what we might discover: so far, most of the evidence suggests we are much more alike than not. And I suspect, unlike Hoberman, that the field of sports will prove this more and more as the cultural differentiation among the various racial groups (however defined) diminishes. The success not only of Yao Ming but white Europeans such as Dirk Nowitzki and Peja Stojakovic in the NBA, a league traditionally dominated by African-Americans, suggests the globalization of sports may have some part to play in confounding, rather than reinforcing, racial athletic stereotypes. Whether or not the influence of sport culture on African-American life (indeed, on American life in general) remains pernicious is another question; not to mention the extent to which social prejudices can persist in spite of the integration of our sportsmen—or rather, as Hoberman argues, *because* of the myths associated with it.

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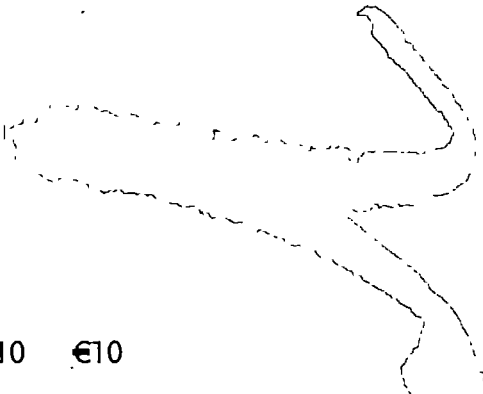
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ALGORITHMS OF WAR

AS THE NAPOLEONIC WARS came to an end, the French liberal Benjamin Constant envisioned a new age of commerce, legality and representative government, in which the traditional war-making powers of the state would wither away. The militarism of the old regime and its revolutionary nemesis had proved ineffectual before a polity based on sound credit and unbridled money-making. As the returns to conquest in the European theatre sharply declined, societies would come to insist on taxing themselves in parliaments and settling their scores on the market. Comparable predictions were offered after the resounding Western victory in the half-century Cold War. The transition to an international order based on capitalism, elections and human rights seemed to form a global trend-line extending into the far future. In this scenario, however, the obsolescence of military force was never seriously considered. The us would preserve the hegemony it had won in the struggle against Communism by protecting the entire zone of affluence against sundry threats in the coming era of globalization. Neutralization of Russia as a great power through NATO encirclement and financial inducements; regulation of China's entry into the world market through checkpoints at the wro and the Taiwan straits; effortless direction of the IMF and World Bank by the Treasury Department; stepped up harassment of rogue regimes, with or without UN enabling clauses; even hostile takeovers of crony capitalisms by Wall Street—all were welcomed by Western opinion, as stock in America soared to all-time highs, under a President who explained that the time of power politics had passed.

This feel-good dictum, however far from the realities of the Washington Consensus, conveyed the relaxed tone of unchallenged primacy. The arrival of a new Republican Administration in 2001 altered the atmosphere: although posting at the outset no far-reaching departures from the

doctrinal innovations of the Clinton era, its harsh improvisations off a familiar script grated nerves in allied capitals. Then came the thunderbolt of 9/11, transforming—to all appearances—the domestic and international scene. A global spectre had materialized, conveniently replacing the galvanizing power of the Soviet threat; and one over which easy victories could be scored to plebiscitary acclaim. Stoking anti-terrorist panic, an invigorated executive team proceeded to implement a replay of the Reagan revolution: massive tax cuts, a new arms build-up, and a determined effort to shift the centre of gravity of the whole political system at home yet further to the right. Abroad, outright military conquest has regained its lustre, as American arms have swept to Kabul and Baghdad, and strikes against Tehran and Pyongyang are contemplated as sequels.

Washington's new 'unilateralism' has naturally aroused disquiet in the ranks of traditional allies and clients, reduced with few exceptions to the role of impotent onlookers. In the eyes of its critics, this is an administration that lives entirely off the momentum of the fortuitous conjuncture of September 11, and seeks to institutionalize it. From its inception the coherence and viability of this audacious enterprise has been the subject of an ongoing controversy amongst pundits, journalists, academics and anti-war demonstrators around the world. For many, the policies of the Bush regime represent a fundamental and bewildering break with the—on balance, rational and benign—international role played by America since 1945, whose achievements came to full fruition in a post-Cold War setting under the last Democratic administration. Typically, in this perspective, Clinton's rule is looked back at longingly, as the halcyon days of a humane and responsible Pax Americana, whose abandonment since has been a brutal disappointment. But—so runs the reassuring message—a return to earlier norms of leadership, a multilateralism more respectful of traditional allies and international institutions, can be expected over time as the sense of domestic emergency fades away, or practical difficulties mount overseas. The current adventurism should be seen as an unsustainable spasm, a neo-conservative coup alien to the underlying spirit of the republic.

Philip Bobbitt's *The Shield of Achilles* gives little comfort to such hopeful prognoses.¹ Its aim is to situate contemporary developments in a long

¹ *The Shield of Achilles. War, Peace and the Course of History*, Foreword by Michael Howard, Knopf: New York 2002; henceforward 2A.

saga unfolding from the Renaissance to the present, whose turning points are periodic revolutions in military affairs that throw constitutional forms into flux, as warring states confront unprecedented strategic alternatives. In excess of 900 pages, the book was probably conceived in the mid-90s when the author—a constitutional lawyer doubling as a deterrence theorist—began to formulate a sweeping critique of the force structure inherited from the Cold War, in contentions over what was to be done with this awesome arsenal after the historic adversary it was designed to overwhelm had ceded the field. *The Shield of Achilles* offers, among other things, a panorama of the debate in Washington over the aims, priorities and instruments of American foreign policy from Desert Storm to Enduring Freedom.

The identity of its author is of more than incidental significance. Bobbitt is not a Republican but a Democrat, and no ordinary Democrat at that. A nephew of Lyndon Johnson, whose father ran LBJ's radio stations, he is a scion of a Texan political elite that has produced such bi-partisan insiders as John Connolly, Lloyd Bentsen or Robert Strauss. His career has been an effortless spiral between academic and political appointments, tracing the profile of a figure at the highest reaches of overlapping establishments. Holder of a chair in constitutional law and international relations at the University of Texas, not to speak of concurrent appointments in history at Oxford and war studies at King's College, Bobbitt is also a member of the American Law Institute, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Pacific Council on International Policy and the International Institute for Strategic Studies. In Washington, he served successively as Associate Counsel to the President under Carter, Counsel to the Senate Iran-Contra Committee under Reagan, Counsellor on International Law at the State Department under Bush Senior, and Director of Intelligence on the National Security Council under Clinton.

The Clinton catalyst

If Bobbitt's opinion of such various masters of the American state is uniformly glowing,² one stands out for especial admiration. Clinton,

² See the revealing interview with Bobbitt by Andrew Billen in *The Times*, 24 June 2002: 'Perhaps we should be reassured that having spent so long so close to power, he has concluded that it is, in the main, wise and benign, that Gerald Ford was "just a wonderful man", Carter not the vacillating indecisive president portrayed and Reagan—from Bobbitt's access to his private correspondence—a master of detail'.

although at first slow to grasp the issues at stake before him, and at times ill-served by his speech-writers, was the statesman who steered the United States towards an entirely new conception of international relations, a change 'of a magnitude no less than Bismarck's'. The turning point in this revolution was the President's decision to intervene, first in Bosnia and then in Kosovo, overriding the anachronistic fetishes of national sovereignty, and the UN legalisms enshrining them, in the higher interests of humanity and the Western community. Bobbitt devotes a passionate chapter of his book to these episodes, in which he was evidently an ardent actor behind the scenes. He has since explained how he proposed to Clinton a justifying doctrine for such operations on a global scale. 'The us would intervene when the threat to our vital strategic interests was overwhelming and imminent; or when significant strategic interests and humanitarian concerns coincided; or, when a vital strategic interest was absent, humanitarian concerns were high and strategic risks were low'.³

In offering the most systematic theorization of American imperial interventions to date, *The Shield of Achilles* makes clear that the major ideological innovations powering them are the creation of the Clinton, not of the Bush Presidency. Here the key development was the proclamation of the legitimacy of military intervention—regardless of national sovereignty or absence of aggression—to defend human rights, to stamp out terrorism, or to block nuclear proliferation. In the name of the first, Clinton launched a full-scale war on Yugoslavia; of the second, bombed Sudan, Iraq and Afghanistan; and of the third, came within an ace of unleashing a pre-emptive attack on North Korea in 1994 (holding off only for the reasons that have so far also restrained Bush—fear of the consequences for Seoul). The Republican Administration, for all its glaring contrasts of style, has essentially operated within the same framework. The principal difference has been tactical—the lesser extent to which it has concerted with its European allies—rather than juridical: the degree to which it has cast aside previous constraints of international law.

It is in keeping with his role under Clinton, therefore, that Bobbitt should have been an eloquent apologist for the invasion of Iraq by Bush, since in his view the Ba'ath regime richly merited attack by just the criteria he had laid down at the time of Bosnia. Saddam was at once an arch-violator

³ 'What's in it for us?', *Guardian*, 7 June 2003. See further *sa*, p. 339.

of human rights, a seeker of nuclear weapons, and—crucially—a holder of strategic assets vital to the us. ‘The West’s interest in prising Iraqi oil out of Saddam’s hands was at least as important a motivation to the us/uk as making the benefits of oil pay for ordinary Iraqis’, he has explained. ‘It was Saddam’s great wealth, derived from oil revenues and put in service of his relentless pursuit of wmd, that made his removal so imperative’.⁴ Temporarily out of office in Washington, Bobbitt thinks the Bush Administration would have done better to insist more openly on the pre-emptive nature of its assault on Baghdad—to prevent rather than destroy Iraqi nuclear weapons—and should have appointed some distinguished Democrats to Cabinet positions, to manifest national unity in the war against terrorism.⁵ Meanwhile, basing himself in London where his numerous academic stints have afforded him contacts at all levels of the local establishment, he has been tireless on behalf of the Blair government, in broadsheets, talkshows and on websites, firming up British opinion for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The role of informal adviser and courtier at Downing Street is curiously apposite, since the living embodiment of the unity of the Clinton and Bush periods is the uk’s social-democratic Prime Minister, an eager apostle of the war aims of both Presidents.

Poetry and piety

If such is the political significance of the career, what is the intellectual character of the work that has been its fruit? *The Shield of Achilles* sets out to present the military interventions of the post-Cold War decade as the latest chapter in the history of Civilization. The literary pretensions of the work are striking enough—the title refers to the ekphrastic passages from the Iliad in which an archaic world of epic strife is presented in microcosm on a hero’s shield. The author subscribes to that ancient dictum: ‘War is the father of all things’—or, as he puts it in more modern idiom, ‘No less than the market and law courts, with which it is inextricably intertwined, war is a creative act of civilized man, with important consequences for the rest of human culture’.⁶ If the pathos of

⁴ *Guardian*, 7 June 2003.

⁵ Talking of the War on Terror last summer, he complained: ‘We are not treating it as a war. If we, in America, were treating it as a war there would be Democrats in the War Cabinet. One of the first things Roosevelt did was bring in Henry Stimson and Frank Knox to be Secretary of War and Secretary of the Navy’: interview with Billen, *Times*, 24 June 2002.

⁶ *SA*, p. xxxi.

the battlefield permeates the book, projecting a heroic vision of war without end, the lyre punctuates its progress. Poems, set in italics, introduce each of its six parts. Their relationship to the arguments that follow is quite adventitious, their rhetorical function lying elsewhere. The selection is preponderantly Eastern European, comprising an anthology of despair on the ravages of modern fanaticism, interspersed with an occasional patriotic ode. The scent of an older *Kulturpessimismus* wafts from these pages. The historian Michael Howard, amidst an otherwise extravagant encomium that prefaces the work, at one point incautiously compares it to Spengler's *Decline of the West*. But Bobbitt's is a more upbeat text. Milosz, Holub, Brodsky, Herbert, Szymborska, laced with a dollop or two of Larkin and Auden, are there to raise the tone. They do not get in the way of a sturdy inventory of the world-historic victories of the West, and the contemporary means of extending them.

The extraneous poetics do little, in fact, to conceal the author's cultural limitations: though French and German phrases occasionally decorate its pages, the bibliography of *The Shield of Achilles*—some three hundred items—is, with a handful of unlikely exceptions, monolingual. Nor do the oddities of the book stop there. While his depictions of an emerging imperial *Machtpolitik* are typically lucid and dispassionate, Bobbitt can also lapse into the most florid sermonizing: the same author who burns with indignation over the fate of Sarajevo contemplates nuclear first strikes with detachment. The resulting rhetoric is a disconcerting combination of pious Americana and cold-blooded diagnostics. The piety is of the Baptist persuasion, the faith that brought Clinton to his genuflections of atonement with the Reverend Jackson, and continues to inspire his successor. Bobbitt displays it in dedications of a flamboyance that belongs to another epoch. *The Shield of Achilles* is devoted

To those by whose love God's grace was first made known to me and to those whose loving-kindness has ever since sustained me in His care.

An earlier work, *Constitutional Fate*, opens with the words:

I would like to say 'This book is written to the glory of God', but nowadays that would be chicanery, that is, the trick of a cheat, for it would not be rightly understood. I mean simply that it came at the end of another's suffering and is intended to serve a value I cannot name that is other than mere self-regard. Insofar as I have failed to be in harmony with this value, my book will fall short of the vision it is an attempt to express.

Such flourishes of postmodern unction sit ill with a pagan militarism. But *The Shield of Achilles* suffers from graver defects than its value dilemmas, or faults of taste. It is a work, to put it mildly, of uneven historical literacy. Purporting to offer a scholarly narrative covering the past five hundred years of (exclusively) Western history, what it in fact offers is a sequence of stylized facts selected to illustrate a lesson or an argument. The real form of the book is that of so many parables—edifying or minatory as the case may be—from the past, after the fashion of popular writers like Barbara Tuchman rather than serious historians in the tradition of Hintze or Bloch. Symptomatic of this mode are uplifting portraits of great, neglected figures whose lives can offer moral inspiration to present actors. Two of these are picked out for such *Boy's Own Paper* treatment in *The Shield of Achilles*, each a lengthy excursus occupying space wildly disproportionate to the ostensible purposes of the analytic scheme: Castlereagh and Colonel House. The first features, logically enough, as the clairvoyant architect of the counter-revolutionary settlement at the Congress of Vienna, whose lonely wisdom lights a beacon to contemporary statesmen in the aftermath of the twentieth century's Waterloo.

The second, Woodrow Wilson's palace familiar, was less successful at Versailles, but nonetheless helped steer America towards its future global destiny. In this case, the role model is closer to home. For House too was a Texan, operating half in the political daylight of electoral machinations, half in the shadows of diplomatic intrigue, yet possessed of a visionary attachment to a 'world made of law' according to us specifications. Bobbitt dwells with especial admiration on *The Inquiry*, the secret body of 126 experts assembled by House in the wake of the October Revolution, 'to collect the data that would provide the factual and analytical basis for an American-directed settlement' in Europe. What the United States needs today, he explains, is a comparable 'Vision Team', also to be convened in secret, but now including not just lawyers and scientists as in Wilson's day, but also business executives, to offer true strategic guidance to the Presidency.⁷ The candidate for House's position is not hard to guess.

Digressions like these might be bracketed as quirks, however revealing, in a text whose force of argument lies elsewhere. A more serious difficulty is posed by the structure of *The Shield of Achilles*, the general

⁷ SA, pp. 399, 315.

organization of which is opaquely jumbled and overextended. The contrast with John Mearsheimer's recent *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, a model of clarity and economy, is stark in this respect, as in others.⁸ Ostensibly divided into two parts, 'State of War' and 'States of Peace', the book obeys no coherent logical or chronological order. It starts with a section on the period 1914–1990; recedes to 1494–1914; jumps forward again to the 1990s and future prospects; swerves sideways to Colonel House and then skips to Bosnia; wheels back to the early 16th century; and works forward once again to the present—finally topping off the menu with imaginary scenarios for the 21st century, complete with an epilogue on the Twin Towers which reiterates George VI's prayers to the Lord in 1939: 'May that Almighty Hand guide and uphold us all'. Bobbitt explains he originally intended to write two volumes, then decided to amalgamate his themes into one. The result is an overweight construction, in which the individual sentences are lucid, even elegant, but their sum becomes corpulent and flabby—a dropsical mass more likely to limit than to attract or impress its target readership.

Strategy and legality

The Shield of Achilles is not, however, reducible to its many weaknesses and eccentricities. As a theoretical work, it possesses one core strength that sets it apart in the strategic literature of the current period. Bobbitt's unusual combination of backgrounds—as constitutional lawyer and weapons expert—has allowed him to combine two perspectives that, as he notes, are normally dissociated: the internal legal—and social—order of states, and their external military and diplomatic constellation. The originality of his book lies in its attempt to address the problem of how to conceptualize the state as, simultaneously, an inwardly and outwardly tested concentration of legitimate public force. In itself, the merit of this enterprise is plain. Bobbitt's way of negotiating it is the most significant criterion for judging the book. Here the architrave on which his account of the succession of modern state-forms as a coherent series depends—the notion that allows him to unify their inner and outer fields as a single system—is that of 'constitution'.

Domestically, of course, this is a familiar part of the political lexicon, denoting the juridical framework of state power within any given

⁸ See Peter Gowan's essay on this important work, 'A Calculus of Power', NLR 16, July–August 2002.

social order: in pre-modern societies, accepted by custom or tradition; in nearly all modern ones, codified in written charters. Bobbitt's key move is to extend its application from the intra-state to the inter-state arena. *The Shield of Achilles* posits a succession of international legal regimes that established the norms of war and diplomacy from late medieval times to the twentieth century:

It is my premise that there is a constitution of the society of states as a whole: that it is proposed and ratified by the peace conferences that settle the epochal wars previously described, and amended in various peace conferences of lesser scope; and that its function is to institutionalize an international order derived from the triumphant constitutional order of the war-winning state.⁹

Bobbitt conceives of these historic peace conferences—Augsburg, Westphalia, Utrecht, Vienna, Versailles—as constitutional conventions following protracted violent conflicts, where the signatories agree to accept the fundamental precepts, over which they will then contend during the next Long War. The conferences that set the rules for this game sanction the strategic doctrine of a hegemonic state whose internal arrangements have proven themselves as the most effective mode of mobilizing and deploying forces.

Two features of this theoretical construction should be noted at the outset. The first is a fundamental equivocation at the level of historical causality. Do strategic—that is, military—revolutions typically give rise to new legal configurations, first within states and then between them? Or is it rather the emergence of juridical innovations within states that ultimately ensures victory on the battlefield? Formally, Bobbitt—viewing the *raison d'être* of state power as in constant movement between the intertwined imperatives of domestic order and foreign dominance—appears to allow for either possibility, without concerning himself to establish any particular dialectic between them. On closer inspection, however, a basic contradiction in his construct becomes clear. On the one hand, he asserts the primacy of internal developments: 'over the long run, it is the constitutional order of the State that tends to confer military advantage by achieving cohesion, continuity and, above all, legitimacy for its strategic operations'—hence 'international law is a symptom of the triumph of a particular constitutional order within the individual states of which that society consists'.¹⁰ On the other, he insists that it is the external

⁹ SA, p. 483.

¹⁰ SA, pp. 209, xxix.

matrix that is decisive: 'The reason epochal wars achieve in retrospect an historic importance is because however they may arise, they challenge and ultimately change the basic structure of the State, which is, after all, a war-making institution'—hence 'an epochal settlement recognizes and legitimates the dominant domestic constitutional order because that archetypal order has been forged in the conflicts that are composed by the peace settlement'.¹²

So formulated, the two postulates are incompatible. In the narrative they unchain, there is little doubt which has the upper hand. Although Bobbitt's primary background, and the bulk of his previous writing, is in constitutional law rather than deterrence theory, in *The Shield of Achilles* it is war and its outcomes that hold front stage. The central claim of the book is that 'constitutional' authorizations periodically mutate in a remorseless geopolitical field of selection, whose history is a sequence of Long Wars, lasting anywhere from thirty to eighty years. The pressure to adopt the latest military innovations leads to a shift in the domestic epicentre of decision-making to those who can most effectively mobilize the newest weaponry, altering the inherited norms of rulership and warfare to their advantage. From the early modern inception of the era of warring states, governments have sought to emulate those innovations that seem to explain the success of their ascending rivals.

This *Primat der Aussenpolitik* is qualified, but not rescinded, by the acknowledgement that domestic revolutions can redefine the strategic goals of states within this field. Aspiring powers seek to emulate the constitutional prototype of the hegemonic state. Weighed down by an older constitutional inheritance, most fail to adopt the winning strategic innovations of an era, and are either annexed, neutralized, or drop back in the race. In each designated period, the author spotlights only those states that represent the sleek line of historical advance, relegating the rest to irrelevance. Constitutional history unfolds as a sequence of decisive attributes of legitimate force—'princely', 'kingly', 'territorial', 'state-national' and 'national-state'—which ultimately comprise a stylized genealogy of the contemporary neoliberal militarism onto which the narrative will debouch.

In this procession, weaponry and diplomacy are what matter. They, not jurisprudence, institute a new legitimacy. Bobbitt accompanies his main

¹² SA, pp. 333, 502.

story with a perfunctory subplot that offers to track the evolution of theories of international law across the same five hundred years. Vitoria, Suárez, Gentili, Grotius, Wolff, Vattel, Austin are passed in hasty review as so many exemplifications of their periods. Just how unserious this sideline in the book is, in fact, becomes clear when it reaches modern times—the inter-war period of the twentieth century. At this point Bobbitt manages to discuss Kelsen without apparently being aware of *Das Problem der Souveränität und die Theorie des Völkerrechts*, and Schmitt without having heard of *Der Nomos der Erde*, the classic study of epochal epistemes in international law, supposedly his topic here—instead floundering out of his depth in divagations on the Frankfurt School. It would be unfair to make too much of the crassness of such sections. For what these glosses on jurists from Salamanca to the New Haven School suggest is a rather modest role for this tradition in defining the terms of statecraft. Perhaps this is because Bobbitt ultimately regards the precepts of international law not as valid norms, binding on great powers, but as a repertoire of elastic formulas, idioms and rationalizations—essentially a loosely scripted, diplomatic language game. Revealingly, he asks at one point, ‘would the history of the twentieth century have been any different if there had been no international law?’, noting—if not endorsing—the caustic judgement of Dean Acheson that ‘the survival of the state is not a matter of law’.¹²

Ambiguating constitutions

If violence and legality are thus by no means on an equal footing in Bobbitt’s account of inter-state relations, how does the latter fare in the domestic evolution of states? Here an anomaly immediately strikes the eye. In no country in the world does the constitution loom larger than in the United States. But for American history to fit Bobbitt’s schema, there would have had to be at least three successive constitutional orders—juridical transformations corresponding to the state-nation, the nation-state and today’s market-state. Even were the Founders to be credited with inaugurating a nation-state proper, skipping the first stage (a line of argument Bobbitt’s account of the Civil War appears to disallow), a second constitution would still seem to be in train, or in order, as the market-state takes form. This would certainly be an incendiary thought for a culture in which the charter of 1787, give or take its handful of subsequent amendments, is treated as a virtually sacred

¹² *SA*, pp. 642, 654.

document. Bobbitt hastens to disavow it.¹³ The Constitution is not, after all, to be touched.

What this reveals, of course, is that Bobbitt's usage of the term 'constitution', at home no less than at large, is essentially tactical and metaphorical. It refers to no tangible charter of rights or firm principles of law, but to dispositions of another kind. Beneath the rhetorical surface of the text, an abrupt dismissal of normative illusions suggests a preference for a more concrete jurisprudence. Bobbitt's conception of a 'constitution' collapses the distinction between hard facts and legal norms. In *The Shield of Achilles* the term refers in practice to a mode of distributing power, wealth and status—a 'regime' in the Aristotelean sense—whose *telos* can be expressed in the form of a legitimating maxim. But it loses nothing by illicit association with its traditional meaning. The slippage from one to the other is integral to the progression of the book.

From the Renaissance to the Great War

Bobbitt begins his historical narrative proper in the prelude to the so-called 'military revolution' from 1560 to 1660. This period witnessed a tenfold increase in the size of armies, the introduction of musket-armed infantry, new schemes of recruitment and drilling, an improvised financial apparatus for the raising and provisioning of troops, and fiscal centralization to keep up with runaway costs. The great monarchies of the sixteenth century began this arms race by emulating the post-feudal miniature polities of the Italian peninsula, earning them, in Bobbitt's account, the Machiavellian title of 'princely state'. Although attributing the rise of the latter to the secular ethos of the Renaissance, he nonetheless has the Counter-Reformation Hapsburgs epitomize its constitutional form. Loosely grounded in its core state territory, this Austro-Hispanic dynasty vied for European primacy with its Valois counterpart for half a century before being forced to a partition of its inheritance and an abandonment of the most grandiose Imperial ambitions at the Treaty of Augsburg in 1555.

The next era of inter-state war erupted along the front lines of continent-wide religious strife. Bobbitt sees the battlefields of the Thirty

¹³ 'I should emphasize that such a transformation does not mean that the present US Constitution will be replaced': 8A, p. 213.

Years War as the testing grounds of an emerging 'kingly state' whose canonical status was eventually ratified at the Treaty of Westphalia. The powerful, separate branches of the Hapsburg clan, residing in Madrid and Vienna, fall out of view, as does the Dutch Republic, whose heyday is transferred, implausibly, to the following century. The seventeenth-century revolutions of the United Provinces and England do not perturb the author's image of an age of ascendant absolutism. Richelieu and Gustavus Adolphus are the two heads of this emerging world, whose constitutional formula is *cuius regio eius religio*. The subsequent reign of the Sun King is regarded as the apogee of this kingly state—in Bobbitt's typology, a dynastic regime fused to a core state territory, clamping down on confessional strife, and practising a predatory fiscalism. The wars of the coalition that contained the military and dynastic aggrandizement of Louis XIV established, in turn, the constitutional form of the 'territorial state' whose vested interest in the balance of power was recognized as a fundamental norm of war and diplomacy at the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713. Eschewing the courtly pomp and dynastic ambitions of Versailles, states defined by Bobbitt as 'territorial' were distinguished by their tolerance, legal rationality and growth-promoting mercantilism. In the classical decades of cabinet warfare, the triumvirate of Great Britain, the United Provinces and Prussia held the fort against a slowly declining Bourbon monarchy.

The constitutional innovations that moved states up the European power hierarchy in the next era of international relations were the legacy of republican upheavals. The French Revolution forged a model of government-orchestrated mass mobilization, subsequently adopted by the most innovative states to re-emerge from Napoleonic occupation. The Hegelian-Clausewitzian figure of 'the state-nation', arising from a drastically pruned old European state-system, claimed to be the ethical embodiment of a historic people. Bobbitt rehearses the story of the Congress of Vienna as a diplomatic convention contending over the security rights and obligations of the Areopagus of Great Powers, in a concert torn between restoration and reform. The story of Castlereagh offers his first tale of a visionary statesman at odds with blinkered contemporaries unwilling to abandon the *status quo ante*. Bobbitt's figure is a conceit of a certain genre of history in which the author ventriloquizes some improbable colossus of world history, comparable in this respect to Kissinger's Metternich, or Calasso's Talleyrand.

Expatriation on his misunderstood genius cannot, however, entirely conceal the aporia of the narrative at this point. Supposedly enshrining the state-nation as the legitimate constitutional form of the new era, in reality, of course, the Congress of Vienna sealed the crushing of its most advanced embodiment—which ought, according to Bobbitt's scheme, to have been the victor—in France, and the triumph of its negation, dynastic legitimism, across the larger part of the Continent, from Alexander I at one end to Ferdinand VII at the other. What these rulers would have made of their presumptive dedication to the 'state-nation' can be left to the imagination.

For Bobbitt, the transition to the next stage of the 'nation-state' is an artefact of the mid-century industrial revolution that brought the landscapes of Manchester to the US and the European continent. Suddenly widening discrepancies in the velocity of troop transport, firepower and scale of provisioning proved decisive in a series of wars of national unification won by Prussia, Piedmont and the Union. These constitutional settlements set the mould for an emerging political universe in which statehood eventually became a populist project of welfare promises, mass education and universal conscription. But the full package only came together in a slide towards total war, as the official state nationalisms of the Great Powers moulted into more militant creeds. Out of the First World War there then sprang the Russian Revolution and Mussolini's March on Rome, as well as Wilsonian idealism, opening a historic conflict between drastically different models of legitimate nation-statehood.

Guilty Germany

The introduction of this axis of division breaks, however, the coherence of the narrative a second time, and more critically. In his accounts of earlier peace conferences, the legitimating norms of the inter-state order were invariably settled not too long after the genesis of the ascendant constitutional paradigm. But at Versailles this constitutive power fails to materialize because of the presence of irreconcilable *ideological* divisions, between regimes belonging to same populist family. Liberal Democracy, Communism and Fascism were the three faces of the twentieth-century nation-state: as opposed to the constitutions that precede it, there are no concrete universals that embody this ideologically divided genus. As a result of the intensity of this internecine struggle, the entirety of

the twentieth-century Long War—from 1914 to 1990—unfolded without a foundational international settlement. In history according to *The Shield of Achilles*, consensual norms of 'nation-state' sovereignty only become system-wide with the conclusion of this Long War at the Peace of Paris in 1990—and then immediately begin to dissolve. Or so it would seem. The discrepancy in the narrative is not registered, let alone addressed by the author.

In this story, Wilsonian internationalism is taken to epitomize the liberal-democratic conception of a nation-state based world order. Bobbitt claims that the purity of American motives was never more in evidence than in Wilson's decision to intervene, which turned back the German offensive of 1918; even more than the later anti-Hitler coalition, this was a moral enterprise *par excellence*. Now is the moment for Colonel House to emerge from the wings. Bobbitt recounts with gusto how, circumventing traditional diplomatic channels, Wilson's confidant was dispatched to uplift the Old World. He does not allow any Jamesian irony to spoil the tale of this bustling American envoy. The story repeats a lesson from an earlier chapter: just as Castlereagh had sought to coax the Holy Alliance towards the emerging norms of the semi-parliamentary state-nation, so now House attempted to move them to an understanding of the highest ideals of the new nation-state. But myopic European belligerents clung to their obsolete prerogatives, disfiguring the future envisioned by Wilson.

Historians who adopt this view usually fault the victorious Entente for abandoning the historic convention of diplomatic amnesty, and attaching unsustainable war-guilt charges to the terms of defeat. By contrast, Bobbitt seeks to conjoin the noble preambles of Wilson to the wintry ultimatums of Clemenceau: in his view, not only had Germany started the Long War, it was destined to remain an essentially criminal aggressor until it met with crushing, punitive defeat. The most bizarre single feature of *The Shield of Achilles* is its resurrection of a 1914-vintage scarecrow of the Huns. Bobbitt's judgements on the Prusso-German Reich consist of a series of astonishingly ignorant assertions. Chief amongst them is the claim that this state was already *fascist* in 1871. Hence, he solemnly informs the reader that: 'the basic continuity in German history between 1871 and 1945 lay in its substantive goal: the defence of a fascist constitutional system against liberalism and socialism'.⁴ Thus he suggests that

⁴ SA, p. 26.

had the victors not imposed such heavy burdens on the Weimar Republic, the Nazis would simply have come to power at an earlier date, and so enjoyed a decisive advantage in the inevitable war to come. The notion that the Weimar Republic collapsed in part due to the harsh terms of the Versailles Treaty warrants scarcely even a dismissal.

Anachronistic as it seems, this animus towards German militarism, in a work that otherwise treats the assorted rapacities and manoeuvres of the Great Powers with *sang-froid*, has a contemporary resonance. One need only think of the rhetorical usages of appeasement, designed to make the equation between Hitler and Saddam Hussein. Embedded coverage of German history constitutes the low point of *The Shield of Achilles*. Elsewhere Bobbitt is quite capable of intellectual independence. He has no difficulty, for example, in acknowledging that the United States was consistently on the offensive against a weaker Soviet Union during the Cold War, and finds that record wholly commendable, praising, for example—though here perhaps family loyalties come into play—his uncle's war in Vietnam and invasion of the Dominican Republic as meritorious episodes in the battle against Communism.¹⁵ Although where necessary he allows himself to be moved by officially sanctioned victimologies, they never entirely bewitch his judgement, as he often alternates these with the harshest nostrums. Indeed he confesses to be looking forward to a near future in which the norms justifying great-power intervention will no longer have to be couched in the language of defence—the now obsolete idiom of the sovereign nation-state.

Dawn or dusk at Paris?

Bringing a close to the pre-history of the present, Bobbitt portrays what he calls the Peace of Paris—the 'Charter for a New Europe' adopted by the CSCE in late 1990—as the diplomatic stage upon which the liberal-democratic constitutional norm of the victorious West finally achieved the universal recognition it missed at Versailles. The importance of this moment for the architecture of Bobbitt's narrative is decisive: it is the true hinge of contemporary history, on which the present continues to turn. Yet just at this crux, the third and most fundamental aporia in his construction breaks open. For on the one hand, the Peace of Paris signals

¹⁵ The Vietnam War 'contributed to the ultimate Alliance victory'; the intervention in the Dominican Republic was 'one of the most successful pro-democracy acts of the period' *sa*, pp. 9, 59, 474.

a new constitution of the society of states, based on worldwide legitimation of democracy, human rights and the market economy. As such it provides the empowering charter for military interventions to secure these norms wherever they are too grossly defied. As Bobbitt puts it:

The Peace of Paris ought to settle this constitutional question for the society of states: no state's sovereignty is unimpeachable if it studiously spurns parliamentary institutions and human rights protections. The greater the rejection of these institutions—which are the means by which sovereignty is conveyed by societies to their governments—the more sharply curtailed is the cloak of sovereignty that would otherwise protect governments from interference by their peers. us action against the sovereignty of Iraq, for example, must be evaluated in this light.¹⁶

So too, he adds, the Peace of Paris strips the mantle of national sovereignty away from any government seeking nuclear weapons that fails to conform to its norms, warranting pre-emptive strikes against the delinquent.¹⁷ In this register, the Charter of 1990 appears as the lineal successor of the Congress of Vienna, setting the terms of legitimate diplomacy and war for an entire epoch, the period ahead.

The briefest glance at the text of the Charter, however, makes clear that the 'Peace of Paris' bears no relation to this construal. It expressly rules out the actions Bobbitt would have it endorse. 'In accordance with our obligations under the Charter of the Nations and commitments under the Helsinki final act,' declared its signatories, 'we renew our pledge to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or from acting in any other manner inconsistent with the principles or purposes of these documents. We recall that non-compliance with obligations under the Charter of the United Nations constitutes a violation of international law'.¹⁸ That this was no mere *clause de style* can be seen from the reaction of the figure who was historically speaking its most significant

¹⁶ SA, p. 680.

¹⁷ 'No state that does not derive its authority from representative institutions that coexist with fundamental rights can legitimately argue that it can subject its own people to the threat of nuclear pre-emption or retaliation on the basis of its alleged rights of sovereignty because the people it thus makes into nuclear targets have not consented to bear such risks. At a minimum, the Peace of Paris stands for this': SA, p. 680.

¹⁸ See 'Charter of Paris for a New Europe': www.osce.org

signatory—given that most of the document was standard boiler-plate for Western politicians—namely Gorbachev: who denounced both NARO's attack on Yugoslavia and the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq.

But if even the most tendentious reading could not make the Peace of Paris into an open-ended Enabling Law, empowering the us to maraud at will in the name of human rights and the prerogatives of the nuclear club, can it really be the dawn of the new international system the epoch requires? At other moments, no doubt sensing its limitations, Bobbitt offers a very different diagnosis, casting the Charter of 1990 in precisely the opposite light. In this version, far from defining a new world order at the end of History, the contracting parties at Paris would have ratified the international norms of a constitutional framework in decline. For at the very hour of its triumph, the bell was tolling for the liberal-democratic nation-state. An entirely new political form, the market-state, has since arisen to supplant it. Bobbitt underscores the drastic nature of this mutation, expressing the difference between the two in the simple, icy formula: the market-state ceases to base its legitimacy on improving the welfare of its people.¹⁹

Instead this new form of polity simply offers to maximize opportunities—to 'make the world available' to those with the skills or luck to take advantage of it. 'Largely indifferent to the norms of justice, or for that matter to any particular set of moral values so long as law does not act as an impediment to economic competition',²⁰ the market-state is defined by three paradoxes. Government becomes more centralized, yet weaker; citizens increasingly become spectators; welfare is retrenched, but security and surveillance systems expand. Bobbitt etches the consequences imperturbably. The grip of finance on electoral politics may become so complete as to erase the stigma of corruption. Waves of privatization will continue to roll over the state, eventually dissolving large parts of it into a looser, shifting ensemble of subcontracted and clandestine operations. (Recalling his stint as an advisor to the Senate investigation of the Iran-Contra Enterprise, Bobbitt calls for a jurisprudence more discerning of the fine lines separating capitalism from crime.)

Public education will implode as parents seek to augment the human capital of their children with early investments in private school. Inequality and crime could grow to Brazilian proportions. Civil liberties

¹⁹ SA, pp. 222 ff.

²⁰ SA, p. 230.

will have to be reconceived to accommodate far-reaching anti-terrorist dragnets. Some of the fictions of citizenship will gradually give way to more realistic weighted voting systems. Representative government itself will become increasingly nominal as media plebiscites openly assume the function of securing the consent of atomized multitudes. National security spin doctoring will become so pervasive as to engender a new epistemology of managed opinion.

Travails of the market-state

As the end-point of his demi-millennial narrative, the market-state sets the stage for Bobbitt's prescriptions for the West today. But though he depicts it graphically enough, he offers no coherent explanation of its origins. Five factors, we are told at the outset, have given a quietus to the nation-state: human-rights norms, weapons of mass destruction, transnational pestilences, global finance and the internet. In another enumeration 'environmental threats, mass migration, capital speculation, terrorism and cyber interference' are the challenges that phased it out.²² Elsewhere, Bobbitt remarks 'the market-state is a constitutional adaptation to the end of the Long War and to the revolutions in computation, communications and weapons of mass destruction that brought that to an end'—only to withdraw the claim as hastily as it is made: 'I have not argued, and do not wish to argue that the State has changed in the precise ways it has *because* of strategic challenges to itself'.²³

The transition to the market-state is thus simply invoked: no real effort is made to explain it as feedback from a revolution in military affairs. Nor, on the other hand, is there any attempt to account for it in terms of the world economic upheavals of the last thirty years, the fiscal crisis of the welfare state, or the ideological sea change brought on by the defeat of Communism. Nowhere, in fact, is the underlying slackness in the causal joints of *The Shield of Achilles* more apparent than here, at the most critical point in its exposition.

Even the chronology of its origins remains curiously vague. If any two architects of the market-state were to be named, Thatcher and Reagan would be the obvious choices—the pioneer of privatization, and the unleasher of financialization on a world scale. In the United States, the agenda of the Reagan Administration to reflate American power

²² SA, p. xxii.

²³ SA, pp. 228, 234.

through rearmament and a vast shakedown of organized labour was no mere paroxysm of the late Cold War: the employer offensive and militarism of the eighties signalled the advent of a new political order in which we are still living today. For Bobbitt, however, 'President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher were among the last nation-state leaders', because their legitimacy still rested on their claim to improve the welfare of their peoples. In scrapping this relic, by contrast, 'Bush and Blair are among the first market-state political leaders'.²³

On this reading, no symbol could have been more apt than Thatcher's fall from power at the very moment she was signing the 'Charter for a New Europe' in Paris in November 1990, when she was ignominiously ousted in her absence by her own party in London. Of the two antithetical accounts of the Peace of Paris that Bobbitt musters, there is little doubt which informs more of the narrative. The media splash of that month, soon forgotten, was not the inauguration of a new constitutional order, but the passing of an old one.²⁴ In short order, a series of post-Cold War crises and disasters dissipated its illusions, creating states of emergency in which the us not only claimed the sovereign right to decide on the interpretation of international law, but increasingly to make and break it at will. The first Gulf War, with its rhetoric of American leadership in the international community, looked as if it would be the inaugural event of the coming era, but ultimately turned out to be a false dawn.

For in the Balkans, the UN proved a broken reed, and the homilies of Paris offered scant guidance. Far from displaying any united purpose, the newly minted market-states fell into lamentable disarray. Bobbitt's account of the Yugoslav crisis shifts the focus from the axial relationship of social structure and strategy to the *mise en scène* of Western public indignation over the fate of Bosnia—that is, from hard to soft power. Although keenly aware of the plebiscitary nature of modern governance, Bobbitt often collapses the world into its journalistic representation. His

²³ SA, p. 222. Elsewhere, in keeping with the overall oscillation of his account at this point, he pays due tribute to the founders: 'Within the most prominent market-states, the groundwork was laid by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, who did so much to discredit the welfare rationale for the nation-state': p. 339.

²⁴ A glance at Plate III, which offers a heraldic diagram of successive international orders, each pivoting at mid-point on its respective peace treaty, makes it clear that the 'Peace of Paris', situated far to the right of the axis of modal settlement, does not fit the series: SA, p. 346.

selective reconstruction of the break-up of Yugoslavia rehashes the official lessons of Atlantic internationalism. It is a story of European appeasement, American hesitation and international indifference in the face of genocide, exposing the incompatibility of human rights and nationalism. In this myth of origins, the villainous Boutros-Ghali—impertinently pointing to the far greater enormities of Rwanda—expresses the shocking sophisms of a dying inter-state order. Western collusion in those events is passed over with unruffled composure.

Fortunately, in the end Clinton saw the light and acted to check Milošević. Thus in practice the turning-point was Rambouillet rather than Paris. Not the pieties of the Concert of Powers, but an ultimatum by the United States was the moment at which the international architecture inherited from the Cold War started to be reshaped.²⁵ Since then, the field of manoeuvre of the American state has steadily widened. The limits of the possible are still being boldly redefined. In Bobbitt's terms, the American regime is the detonator of an expanding legal universe of market-states, bursting asunder an old international order based on the nominal recognition of the sovereignty of all nation-states. The norms of twentieth-century treaty and alliance structures are thus in flux. This disorder is not, however, the transitional manifestation of a constituent power at work, but a new, protean mode of imperial authority that is dispensing with the very form of universal legal rules and adopting a jurisprudence based on flexible strategic guidelines.

American supremacy

In that sense, treaty conferences are mere chapter headings in the annals of history: their meaning comes from what follows. Since the declarations of Paris, the US, as the undisputed champion of the neo-liberal market-order, has had to take the lead in rewriting the rules of property, war and peace. This has entailed exposure to the risk of being held accountable to the rules of one's own making. But Bobbitt believes that the problem can easily be circumvented by a prudent insistence on flexibility and exemptions. Treaties on land mines, a human-rights court, chemical and biological weapons, anti-ballistic missiles and emissions that do not sufficiently safeguard America's interests, should be discarded without qualms. The United States is simply not in the same

²⁵ See *SA*, p. 468, though Bobbitt appears not to register the contradiction in his account.

position as other states, and therefore should not be shamed by charges of hypocrisy when it fails to adopt the regimes that it urges on others.²⁶ In contrast to those who see in the contemporary imperialism a freak storm brought on by neo-conservative hubris, Bobbitt vividly sketches the long-term logic of American expansion.

The United Nations is only one pillar of a now tottering international dispensation: in this age of creative destruction, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the IMF, the OSCE, the European Union and even NATO itself will either be reformed, or decline into irrelevance. The emerging world of market-states mirrors its domestic social shape: it is openly run by highly selective clubs in which rank is apportioned in strict accordance to financial and military clout. The legitimating maxim of these planetary oligarchies is 'to each according to his abilities'. Although Bobbitt occasionally rehearses some of the mantras of globalization, the age we are entering is portrayed as a scene of gated affluence surrounded by immiseration, violence and epidemic disease, with little alleviating Homeric joy. The characteristic promise of the age of nation-states was economic development for backward, 'late-coming' regions, but Bobbitt suggests that this too is now being rescinded. The terms of trade between advanced and backward regions are at present as bad as they were during the Great Depression; the possibility of leapfrogging development under conditions of protection is now closed off.

In this landscape, the US now enjoys uncontested supremacy. How long will it last? Bobbitt is at pains to dispel the suspicion that the constitution of all market-states must be modelled to American specifications. Europe and Asia currently have their own variants, expressing different cultural lineages and slightly diverging public priorities. Thus there are at present, he suggests, a trio of market-state forms—'entrepreneurial', 'managerial' and 'mercantile'—that represent the familiar dominants of the OECD: the Anglo-Saxon street, the Rhenish stakeholder model, and Japan Inc. Here each is graced with its own verdant image: the Meadow (US), the Park (Germany) and the Garden (Japan). Bobbitt sketches their respective traits with an air of impartiality, as if all were of equal standing, and any might ultimately prevail over the others.

But, as one might expect, this is little more than a gesture. The mercantile and the managerial variants, Japan and Germany, divide the legacy of

²⁶ SA, p. 691.

the nation-state; the first retaining a traditionalist ethos of group responsibility, the second, interest-group cooperation and social justice. Only the entrepreneurial version—the us—approaches the pure model of the market-state, and therefore is set to out-compete the others. 'Its multiculturalism, its free market, and its diverse religious make-up—all of which resist the centralizing efforts of the nation-state—and, above all, its habit of tolerance for diversity give it an advantage over other countries in adapting to this new constitutional order'.²⁷

This, of course, is far from capturing the unique position of the United States in the international system, where Washington can use its massive military advantages to forestall the verdict of the world market on the increasingly unstable economic foundations of its primacy. In the inter-war era, major European states were willing to accept American arbitration of their affairs in large part because they were massively in debt. The us exercised an awesome creditor veto on any international debt settlement that would have brought an end to this destabilizing circulation of money in the world economy. Today the situation is reversed. If American hegemony is accepted by potential rivals, it is in part because however poorly most national economies have fared in the past thirty years, the affluent of all countries have shared in the bounties of unbridled financial markets, and continue to look to American capitalism as the horizon of the future.

But more fundamentally, they have reason to fear that in practice they have little choice in the matter. For however 'irresponsible' its macro-economic policies may be, the difficulties and risks of trying to impose fiscal discipline on the us look prohibitive, since American deficits now form the principal source of the demand that drives the world economy. The us market is the key to the export economies of the rest of the world. For the moment, this is the basic check on the tendency of an anarchic inter-state system to throw up balancing coalitions against what might otherwise be a destabilizing concentration of power at the apex of world politics.

Bobbitt's concerns lie elsewhere. Economic calculations surface only desultorily in *The Shield of Achilles*, and the typology of the market-state

²⁷ SA, p. 242. Moreover, 'the entrepreneurial model offers the United States the best chance of developing, marketing and "selling" the collective goods that will maintain American influence in the world' p. 292.

has little incidence on its argument. The historical narrative it constructs is essentially an erratic, grandiose prologue to contemporary strategic debates in Washington. At this point, the discussion moves to the canonical national-security briefs that defined the aims of the American state at moments when it confronted the option between fundamentally different stances towards competitors and enemies; and surveys the alternatives that are now circulating inside the Beltway. Here Bobbitt's account is terse and controlled, setting out with exemplary clarity the range of doctrines currently on offer: a new nationalism (Buchanan), a new 'internationalism' (Brzezinski), a new realism (Kissinger), a new evangelism (survivors of Clinton), and 'the new leadership' of the sole remaining superpower (Krauthammer). Reproaching each with proposing only a set of policies for the US state, Bobbitt calls for a more long-term paradigm to define its strategic outlook in the twenty-first century. But in practice, his recommendations differ little from the 'new leadership', the most aggressive of all agendas for contemporary American empire.

This position has the merit of candour. Bobbitt has no time for customary hypocrisies about international law or the United Nations. 'The universal view of international law is flawed in two important respects', he notes: 'It mixes the equality of states, a legal concept, with the decision to use force, a strategic concept, in a way that is fatal to both'. Were the UN General Assembly ever to demand 'economic concessions and constitutional reform consistent with a universal mandate', the result would either be contradictory, since the Security Council retains the character of a Concert of great powers, or perilous, because of the demagoguery of vast majorities.²⁸ Like the League before it, the UN has spawned a 'second generation of failures, that is, a new wave of crimes shielded by sovereignty'. The future lies rather with another Congress, like Utrecht or Vienna, to create 'a constitution for a society of market-states that will resemble those of corporations, which allow for weighted voting based on wealth'.²⁹ But that time is still far off. Meanwhile, the United States must act as it can, to 'devise a strategy of long-term dominance over peer competitors that will enable it to prevail in conventional confrontations as well as to field expeditionary forces'.³⁰

Recent Bush Administration strategy is based on the expectation that vigorous mobilizations of American-led coalitions of the willing, followed

²⁸ SA, pp. 361, 475.

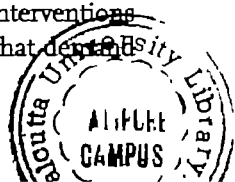
²⁹ SA, pp. 472, 475, 777.

³⁰ SA, p. 302.

by earth-shaking victories, will periodically replenish the stock of political pressure available for strong-arming the reluctant and recalcitrant at all negotiating tables. For the moment, the environment appears favourable enough to such designs. Although Washington has sharpened the tone against France and Germany, it has taken an extremely accommodating line towards Japan: recognizing that while Japan subsidizes America's massive and growing debt, conveniently it has no capacity or will to use that leverage. For all the Washington bluster directed at them, the political classes of Paris and Berlin are for the moment quite unwilling to invest in the very costly and risky business of attempting to construct an independent centre of gravity in world politics—and this will continue to be the case unless they are forced down this path. Russia's slow-motion decline appears to require only a modicum of encouraging speeches, encirclement and periodic emergency loans; and unlike the old Soviet Union, China is thoroughly integrated into an American-dominated world market, in which it seeks only to expand, without excessive disruption.

Adversaries

But this very freedom from external balance-of-power constraints contains the danger of a wilful exaggeration of threats and a casual underestimation of obstacles. The discipline that a nuclear-armed Soviet Union once imposed on America's rulers has evaporated. The rhetoric of the Republican Administration is an ominous anticipation of what might happen in the event of a world economic downturn. Yet even an escalation of hostilities between the us and China or Russia, or Europe or Japan, would be unlikely to reverse one of the central sociological trends of the post Second World War era: the decline of mass militarism in Western Europe and Japan after forty years of heavy casualty warfare, a process that eventually reached the us during the high point of its Indochinese operations. The enormous conscript citizen armies of the Great Power nation-state were either destroyed in the immediate aftermath of the War or discredited in the last decades of colonialism. The raising of overarching nuclear umbrellas, the advent of consumerism, the cultural neutralization of nationalist pathos in public life, the final collapse of rural social strata from which both officers and soldiers were recruited and the break-up of traditional gender roles sealed the fate of an older Great Power politics. The only military interventions now capable of soliciting domestic acclamation are those that deny



no heavy sacrifices of the home front. It is now well understood, as ballooning American deficits testify, that under no circumstances can the social segment extending from the wealthy to the super-rich be asked to bear the costs of empire.

Bobbitt recognizes this irreversible change, although confessing ambivalence towards it—a nostalgia which ‘I feel more than most’.³¹ *The Shield of Achilles* can in part be read as a swan song to this older militarism of state-nations and nation-states. But it is also a distinctively postmodern call for yet another heroic age. The book repeatedly, if inconclusively, raises the question: should we brace ourselves for wars between the American, European and Japanese variants of the market-state in the twenty-first century, like those between liberal democracy, Fascism and Communism in the twentieth? Two years into the First World War, Lenin declared that imperialism was not simply a policy: it was the structural logic of world-market competition refracted through the field of Great Power rivalry. Bobbitt never goes so far, but there are hints in *The Shield of Achilles* that the neoliberal ‘constitutional’ upheaval of the last two decades may now be assuming its true geopolitical form, not in the utopias of peaceful Free Trade, but in an abrupt sharpening of inter-state tensions at the top tier of the world power hierarchy.

Here, in a volume whose horizon is otherwise undeviatingly Atlantic—all of whose narrative landmarks take their names from European cities—the focus of anxiety is Pacific. The prospect of Japan acquiring nuclear weapons is, in Bobbitt’s eyes, far more dangerous than that of North Korea. Indeed, he argues, it might be necessary to tolerate the latter in order to avert the former.

It would be a tragedy for the world if, in order to extirpate a North Korean nuclear force with which Japan has learnt to live, we plunged the Korean peninsula into a war that led to the mobilization of Japan’s energy and wealth on behalf of its armed forces. Already the Japanese, with less than 1.5 per cent of GDP, field the world’s third largest defence establishment, and there is no NATO-like institution that links this establishment with the forces of surrounding states.³²

³¹ ‘The Long War of the nation-state is over, having destroyed every empire that participated in it, every political aristocracy, every general staff, as well as much of the beauty of European and Asian life’. SA, pp. 242, 805.

³² SA, p. 261; see also p. 687.

By contrast China, which looms large in Mearsheimer's analysis of potential future threats to the United States, is—rather mysteriously—accorded scant attention by Bobbitt.

The need to check the ambitions of would-be rivals, expressly set out for the first time in the Pentagon's Defence Planning Guidance of 1992, and since enshrined in the National Security Strategy proclaimed by Bush in 2002, occupies first place in Bobbitt's global prospectus, which ranks enemies in terms of the dangers they pose to the us, and aims to adjust the force structures made possible by the Revolution in Military Affairs to counter them. Adversaries can be classified in an ABC table. The 'A' group consists of peer competitors: Bobbitt lists Germany, France, Japan and Russia. 'B' comprises mid-level powers on the verge or just beyond WMD potential: Pakistan, India, Iran, Iraq, North Korea. 'C' embraces a more motley category of minor rogue states (Libya, Serbia, Cuba), terrorists, criminals and insurgents. China is left unclassified. *The Shield of Achilles* makes no bones that the top priority is to ensure military superiority over the A-powers. 'The greatest threats to American security will come from powerful, technologically sophisticated states—not from "rogues", whether they be small states or large groups of bandits'.³¹ In keeping with this conviction, Bobbitt has recently expressed his reservations about the 'Axis of Evil' and, true to his Cold War *métier*, asserts that facing the challenge of A-list states is a matter of maintaining nuclear primacy over them, by integrating them under the American shield.

Though ultimately less menacing to the us, because they do not actually threaten the American homeland, B targets pose more immediate risks of nuclear proliferation, and should be dealt with accordingly. In this respect the signature innovation of the last decade is the doctrine, of which Bobbitt has been a foremost champion, foreseeing pre-emptive strikes against states on the threshold of weapons of mass destruction. It is on these grounds that he has applauded the conquest of Iraq. But he anticipates continuing pressure towards proliferation in the B list to compensate for America's overwhelming conventional superiority, and concludes that the use of nuclear weapons will be more likely in the future. No treaties to neutralize the arms races to come are foreseen.

What, then, of C targets? Here a further anomaly becomes visible. The challenges that command Bobbitt's survey of potential dangers to

³¹ SA, p. 315; see also pp. 306, 309.

American hegemony, at force-levels A and B, have virtually nothing to do with the imputed novelties of the market-state. Nuclear weapons were a creation of the Second World War, and the centrepiece of the Cold War, which saw their spread not only to Britain, France and China, but also to Israel and South Africa. They belong to the epoch of the nation-state. It is really only at level C, the least significant, that specifically market-state considerations enter into play. At once artefact and agent of 'globalization', the strengths and weaknesses of the market-state arise from its exposed, porous borders. These are the frontiers across which a fanatical terrorism can snake and strike, dissolving the line separating foreign policy from homeland surveillance.

In his considered inventory of the perils confronting the US, no doubt composed during the Clinton Administration, Bobbitt consigned such threats to a residual category, at the bottom of the ABC hierarchy. But, perhaps sensing the disjunction between his diagnostics of the 'new constitutional order' and his predictions of the rather traditional turbulence awaiting it, he seems to have felt it necessary to up the stakes of jeopardy specific to the market-state, by tacking onto his work a series of lurid futurological scenarios. Supposedly, the inspiration for these came (a suitably market-state touch) from managerial deliberations within Royal Dutch Shell, but in fact they are closer to the pop fantasies of Tom Clancy. Terrorist explosions in the Chunnel and Chartres Cathedral, devastating Water Wars in the Subcontinent, raging pandemics in Africa, chemical attacks on South Korea, world economic collapse, pre-emptive strikes in Central Asia, race riots in Washington—the pages are littered with assorted disasters and death tolls.

None of the theories Bobbitt develops in the book are demonstrated or tested in these phantasmagorias, which even admirers have regretted. But such apparently extraneous flights of fancy have their function. They ratchet up what Mike Davis has called 'the globalization of fear', with images that create the right psychological atmosphere for a draconian doctrine of armed pre-emption at home and abroad.²⁴ In such

²⁴ A passage from Aristotle's *Politics* captures the political dynamics of this hyperbole: 'When danger is imminent, people are anxious and they therefore keep a firmer grip on their constitution. All who are concerned for the constitution should therefore create anxieties, which will put people on their guard, and will make them keep watch like sentinels on night-duty. They must, in a word, make the remote come near.' *Politics*, book V, ch. 8, Oxford 1995.

panic-mongering, *The Shield of Achilles* gives a narrative shape to the nightmares that plague the market-state, rendering them as the cinematic scenery of a heroic twilight of the West.

But like Spengler's version before it, which foresaw the—possibly ominous—arrival of a new Caesar to save a dying civilization, this one too ends with a stoic posture. The West cannot avert the epochal war to come, but it may hope to shape it. The attacks of September 11 provide the United States with a 'historic opportunity' to awaken its citizens to the tasks before them. 'War is a natural condition of the State, which was organized to be an effective instrument of violence on behalf of society. Wars are like deaths, which, while they can be postponed, will come when they will come and cannot finally be avoided'.³⁵ Adorno's observation that, for all its obvious intellectual crudity, Spengler's thesis stood unrefuted, should be kept in mind.

³⁵ SA, p. 819.

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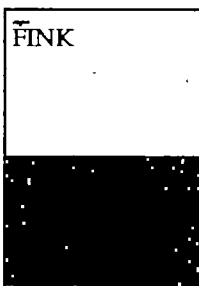
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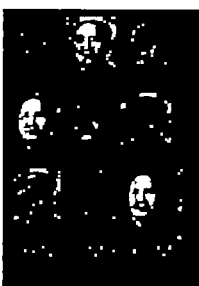


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FRANCIS MULHERN

WHAT IS CULTURAL CRITICISM?

STEFAN COLLINI now gives free expression to the concern that was already evident in his first response to *Metaculture*.¹ If the historical category of Kulturkritik and my unorthodox use of it have been prominent in the exchange to date, this is in large part because it is overdetermined by issues whose charge is contemporary and prospective. 'Defending cultural criticism' is Collini's title, not 'leave it to the historians'. Of course, criticism and history cannot be simply partitioned in this case. Collini insists with more than conventional force on the continuity between them, and with reason. Nevertheless, I will say nothing more about historic Kulturkritik, except in passing. Neither of us is ready to concede, and others will weigh the arguments for themselves.

That Collini really is engaged in a defence is beyond doubt. But what is the substance of the position he wishes to defend? My purpose here is to attempt an outline of his cultural criticism, as it emerges in response to *Metaculture* and in a selection of other relevant writings from the past fifteen years. It will be necessary to tread lightly. Having begun his scholarly career as an intellectual historian in the contextualist style of Quentin Skinner and his collaborators, Collini has gone on to develop a recognizably literary approach still further at variance with the textbook histories of thought.² He has little sympathy with those who expect or impute 'doctrine' or 'system' or 'theory' in the thinkers he studies, and even modest 'views' can be put in their place, which is between ironizing quotation marks.³ Anyone approaching his own writing in that spirit is open to the charge of intellectual crassness. However, he has given

some headwords as preliminary guidance: culture, politics, intellectuals. Others will emerge in the course of discussion.

I. THINKING CULTURAL CRITICISM

Collini begins by relieving the phrase 'cultural criticism' of its everyday ambiguity. It is not, or not only, criticism of culture. Culture is what animates and orients the critical practice, whose object is society or, better, 'prevailing public discourse'. This is culture as 'artistic and intellectual activities'—not the only meaning of the term, he agrees, but, as Raymond Williams recognized, the 'primary' one. The criticism it underwrites is politically modest in ambition and effect, not driven as metacultural discourse supposedly is, and certainly not fated to reactionary conclusions. 'Distance', 'reflectiveness' and generality are its defining critical qualities. Its touchstones can be found in T. S. Eliot, but also in Matthew Arnold before him, in George Orwell and later in Richard Hoggart 'and so on'. This is recognizable as a self-description (except in its evocation of Eliot, whom I for one would not have thought to associate with Collini's critical journalism). What is less clear, however, is its logic.

The elusive value of culture

Collini emphasizes the semantic difficulty of 'culture': this was the opening note of 'Culture Talk', and he strikes it again in his second essay. But the difficulty is not simply semantic, and it cannot be resolved, even temporarily, by a self-aware, negotiated protocol of usage of the kind he now sets out. For if the restrictive meaning of culture is in one respect shared, as familiar currency, in another it is a site of inescapable contention.

¹ 'Defending Cultural Criticism', NLR 18, Nov–Dec 2002, pp. 73–97. See also Mulhern, *Culture/Metaculture*, London 2000; Collini, 'Culture Talk', NLR 7, Jan–Feb 2001; Mulhern, 'Beyond Metaculture', NLR 16, July–Aug 2002.

² His first book, *Liberalism and Sociology: L. T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England 1880–1914*, Cambridge 1979, acknowledged a debt to Skinner. Arnold, Oxford 1988, marks a shift in treatment, confirmed a few years later in *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850–1930*, Oxford 1991.

³ Arnold, pp. viii, 3; see also *Public Moralists*, p. 3. For his own account of the context of his work in the later seventies and eighties, see the 'General Introduction', in Collini, Richard Whatmore and Brian Young, eds, *Economy, Polity and Society: British Intellectual History 1750–1950*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 1–21. This is one of a pair of volumes marking the retirement of Collini's senior collaborators John Burrow and Donald Winch.

It is possible to reach a working agreement about the kinds of thing that count as instances of 'culture' in his sense; there will be boundary disputes, but none so fierce as to unmake the field as such. However, the empirical reference of the term is overdetermined by its disputed conceptual significance. The 'other meanings' of culture, which Collini peaceably sets aside for other occasions, inhabit its 'narrower sense', as parties to a conceptual antagonism now inherent in it.

Two constructions of this same 'sense' are especially pertinent. In the first, culture marks a convergence of positive values in opposition to non-culture, the prevailing order of good sense. This, in the language of *Metaculture*, is culture as principle. In the second, associated with Williams and cultural studies, the narrow empirical reference survives alongside the wider one, but under a different concept. The same material is now thought differently, understood as a specific historical formation of values and practices, a 'high' register within the social relations of meaning as a whole. Literature and philosophy are not simply dissolved into 'a whole way of life', a phrasing that Williams borrowed from Eliot in his early formulations of his own distinct object of inquiry, which was '*the relations between elements in a whole way of life*'.⁴ Even where they are set aside in favour of the unexplored world of popular pleasures and identifications, as they were, with deforming intellectual consequences, in the new routines of cultural studies, they persist as aspects of a reconstructed object, the social relations of meaning as a whole. Were it not so, the new concept of culture would simply invert the dualism of the old, foreclosing its own theoretical implications, which reach into every corner of empirical 'culture'. The old 'sense' of culture is an aspect of the historical object of the new one, which is what Yuri Lotman termed 'the semiosphere' (a coinage that has the signal advantage of not being that damned word).⁵ Reiterated uncritically, it is too much for the purposes of Collini's cultural criticism, just as the second, properly understood, is too little.

Culture in the first case is too much in that it presupposes a subject that can occupy that site of convergence, speaking from and to a general interest. Not welcoming the philosophical burden of that logic, Collini dismisses its embodiment, Arnold's 'best self', as 'dubious and unappealingly dated', and that, apparently, is that. The second

⁴ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, London 1958, pp. 11-12. Emphasis added.

⁵ Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind. A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, London 1990, pp. 123-214.

construction accords more closely with his intramundane appreciation of culture and society, but not in a way that furthers the project of cultural criticism. For in this case, art and ideas take shape and direction in the same divided historical world of sense that frames 'prevailing public discourse'—to which, indeed, they bring their distinctive varieties of texture and finish. 'Distance' can be more than conventional, yet still measurable within the space of the ideological dominant. He will not have forgotten Williams's analysis of the English industrial novel, in which strong, eloquent witness to the reality of working-class suffering coexisted, imaginatively, with an ungovernable fear of mass irrationality.⁶ Literature is no less prone to such disturbance of vision when it turns 'reflective' in the stronger sense, and examines the relationship between its own genus, culture, and society. For example, it would be difficult not to read Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* for what, in one clear sense, it is: a critique, in tragic mode, of the prevailing social order of culture. Yet it is not easy to overlook the ambiguity of its truncated biblical motto, which puts learning itself in question: 'the letter killeth'.⁷ Untimely death has been a standard outcome in the English 'condition of culture' novel, figuring a narrative judgement on those characters who think to honour culture, or aspire to it, or think to impart it, or simply inherit it. Reardon in *New Grub Street*, Bast in *Howards End*, Melinda and her family in *A Judgement in Stone* are, like Jude and Sue in Hardy's novel, among the slightly ridiculous victims of culture's ambivalent relationship to its best self.⁸

The doubled reflectivity of the critic—intellectual activity directed to the arts—offers further adverse testimony, suggesting that distance is too purely formal a criterion to assist the inevitably substantive choices entailed in any criticism of society. Eliot took his critical distance from post-war Britain, with explicitly reactionary intent. Hoggart also measured a distance, from the vantage point of culture 'in the narrow sense', but made an antithetical reading of present dangers and possibilities. His critique of cultural commerce did not extend to the capitalist property-relation itself, or to the paternalism of official cultural policy. Williams's crucial initiative, following on from his critical reflection on 'the idea of culture', was to bring both into theoretical view as the matrix of contemporary cultural organization, and to urge a socialist alternative based on a revised theoretical account of culture. There is a *reductio ad absurdum* in these

⁶ Williams, *Culture and Society*, part 1, ch. 5.

⁷ 2 Corinthians 3. The full declaration, as rendered in the Jerusalem Bible, is: 'the written letters bring death, but the Spirit gives life.'

⁸ George Gissing, 1891; E. M. Forster, 1910; Ruth Rendell, 1977; Hardy, 1896.

comparisons. Here are three reflective, critically distant contributions to postwar discussion of culture and society. They all meet Collini's minimum criteria for cultural criticism, and they are mutually incompatible. Yet it is difficult to see how a critic equipped only with the developed aptitudes that Collini specifies could set about discriminating among them—how 'culture', so reduced, could energize and direct a critique.

Status of politics

Having saved culture by moderating its agonistic theoretical content, Collini then restores proportion to the question of politics in a counterpart stroke, discovering in my generic references to 'politics' not the single meaning I emphatically intend, but two. Again, they come broad and narrow. When I discuss 'Kulturkritik's jeremiads against the failings of contemporary "civilization", he writes, "politics" appears in the conventional, newspaper reader's sense.' But when I 'indict that tradition . . . for attempting to "displace politics" or to "dissolve political reason itself", something more encompassing and more elevated is in play'⁹—in my own words, politics as 'the struggle to determine the totality of social relations in a given space'. This perceived duality is what used to be called a strong misreading—and one that courts danger just at the point where it appeals to the authority of common experience, in the figure of the newspaper reader.

It must have been difficult for a curious reader of the European press, between the Armistice and the crash of 1929, to rest for long with distinctions of the kind that Collini has in mind. Revolution and counter-revolution, or the expectation of such outcomes, civil war, nation-building and constitution-making were among the familiar extremities of the decade, toning the experience of public affairs even in the less troubled polities of the continent. The cultural critics, who surely counted among the more attentive readers of the time, made no such distinction. Mann rejected politics *tout court* as un-German, Mannheim's intellectual strategy was pitched against 'the party schools' of the far Left and Right. Leavis's sense of the final triviality of politics found expression not so much in his disdain for the Westminster everyday as in his refusal of Communism, which was the occasion for some of his most trenchant programmatic declarations. For Benda and Ortega, the state of journalism was itself a prime symptom of politically conditioned crisis, evidenced most graphically in the proliferation of agitational sheets that find no

⁹ 'Defending Cultural Criticism', pp. 86–7 (grammar modified for context).

buyers, only sellers.¹⁰ In every case, the cause of alarm was 'encompassing', and 'elevated' indeed, if only in the scale of cultural perversion.

The appeal to the newspaper reader's sense of politics is historically parochial—and perhaps not even that, in so far as it corresponds little better to the domestic experience of the past quarter-century. In my first response to Collini, I distinguished between 'maintenance' and 'transformation' as the basic modes of political practice. It is easy to see how this formula might be read as shadowing the distinction he now finds in *Metaculture*. That reading would be mistaken. The two modes are not simple alternatives or complements. They can cooperate so closely as to differ only as aspects of a single strategy—as they have in the governance of capitalism in Britain since 1979. The well-being of capital and the state was the great, simple principle of Conservative strategy in the eighties and beyond, just as, in modified form, it is Labour's today. It is the basic sense of 'maintenance' in bourgeois politics. Yet the work of maintenance, in the Thatcher years, took the form of a sequence of departures, initiatives in a concerted class struggle from above that opened a new period in Britain's contemporary history. Unions were cornered and attacked, public assets sold off, social welfare reprogrammed for failure; money was set free and, even as inequality and relative poverty deepened, everyday experience was subjected to new intensities of commodification. Much of this appeared implausible in prospectus, a dream of policy doctrinaires and their vengeful patron. Yet it was achieved, and has now been normalized, both at home and internationally, where it figures as a pioneering example of the new model capitalism. The newspaper readers of recent decades have had an exemplary education in the visionary politics of capital.

Of course, it is possible to grant these arguments and still resist the idea that politics has a claim to final authority in social relations. There are obvious reasons for doing so. The goals of political activity normally lie outside politics, which in that sense cannot claim finality. Political practice has its own necessary disciplines, arising from its agonistic structure, and a campaigning demand is no substitute for the modes of engagement associated with culture—unless, of course, as Collini

¹⁰ Joseph Roth: 'on Potsdamer Platz, a little forest of papers has been planted . . . You hear the repetitive *hack-hack-hack* of the nationalist woodpecker. But these newspapers find only sellers. I am their sole buyer.' 'Election Campaign in Berlin' [1924], *What I Saw: Reports from Berlin 1920–1933*, trans. Michael Hofmann, London 2003, p. 192.

might say, for 'the mind that can only think in terms of "positions"'.¹¹ He is speaking here on behalf of Arnold rather than himself, but not—if the free indirect style allows a confident reading—at any significant distance from the general judgement he reports. It is worth pausing for a moment. The logic of the half-stated contrast between positional and another, more adequate kind of thinking is defensively forced. The modifier 'only' works to marginalize a third possibility, which is that neither kind is adequate for all relevant purposes. Arnold's belief in the 'irrigating' value of criticism in public affairs is in general terms unexceptionable. But this prickly statement of contrasts appeals to the bolder idea that positional thinking, which politics entails, is intrinsically wanting, even where it is inescapable; that the cast of mind associated with criticism is intrinsically preferable. Other passages in Collini's study lend credence to this reading. Arnold's 'deep intellectual affinity' with Platonism 'suggests what might be described as the "anti-political" character of his thought', he writes.¹² At another moment, he speaks with unmistakable warmth of 'that kind of literary criticism which is also cultural criticism and thus . . . a sort of informal political theory'.¹³ The closing phrase is a winningly modest description of a work—*Culture and Anarchy*—that looked towards an ideal union of culture and the state.

A bourgeois state, it is pertinent to add, not in a spirit of heroic retrospection, but because bourgeois society defined Arnold's imaginative horizon, for all his criticism of it, and quite naturally shaped his evaluation of political possibility—his sense of what, in the end, it might be worth. His contemporary Marx saw in the same society the conditions of a qualitatively superior collective life beyond it, to be achieved by political means. The difference of historical perspective is fundamental. For the communist Marx, the very idea of politics exercised a power of moral attraction that would have been incongruous for Arnold, the disinterested 'Liberal of the future'. Collini is not Arnold. He makes a point of informing his readers that his identification with his subject is less strong than it appears to be. Yet it may be that in this regard they are not far apart.

Intellectuals, or algebra

Overlooking what appears to be a real difference between us, a difference of political evaluation about which there is little to be done, Collini fastens on an imagined one. 'Behind [my] various strictures on the

¹¹ Arnold, p. 9.

¹² Arnold, p. 91.

¹³ Arnold, p. 67.

"elitist" and "pseudo-aristocratic" failings of past cultural critics there lies . . . not just a theoretical antipathy but a more personal unease with the fact of *being* an intellectual'. Coming from a critic so keen-eyed and unsparing in his pursuit of the anti-intellectualism of intellectuals, this is a daunting suggestion—or would be, if there were grounds for it. But there are none. Collini is chasing a shadow. What he has to say about the cultural division of labour and its tenacious real effects, about the 'necessarily asymmetrical relations of intellectuals and publics', is uncontroversial—and familiar, with all due qualifications made, from Gramsci and Sartre, among others.

He is right too to insist that the habitus and practice of 'the intellectual' as classically figured—the assumption of public responsibility without benefit of office—need not be 'elitist', though mistaken if he imagines that this resolves the difficulty before us. The question implicit in my 'Intellectual Corporatism and Socialism', a short text from the late 1980s that Collini puts to use at this stage in his argument, concerned the conditions of the 'intellectual' claim, and its moral substance.⁴ Corporatist traditions of intellectual self-projection have offered one kind of validation: intellectuals are in principle a cohesive social group, bonded morally in a commitment to universals by virtue of which they pass judgement on the world. The challenge facing any reasoned—rather than merely declared—version of this general position is to elucidate the social grounding of the universals and to explain, in non-moralistic and non-tautological terms, why, as the empirical record shows, most intellectuals are not, and never have been, 'intellectuals'. The schematic alternative to corporatism is to accept the record as indicating the truth of the matter, which is that the characteristic practice of intellectuals is one modality of intervention among others in the contested field of social relations, rather than a distinctive allegiance within it. However hesitantly, with however much self-monitoring, intellectuals make their choices from a range of historical possibilities that they share with everyone.

Corporatism is not an option for Collini. He shrugs off the association with Arnold's moral-psychological notion of the best self, which would at least support an appeal to universals, and is stung by my use of the term 'authoritarian', in which, it may be, he mistakenly senses a demagogic suggestion of epaulettes and riding boots. Yet it seems unlikely that he

⁴ 'Intellectual Corporatism and Socialism: the Twenties and After', in Mulhern, *The Present Lasts a Long Time*, Cork 1998, pp. 85–92.

would settle for the second position, which grants the customary generic figure of 'the intellectual' rather less status than he reserves for it in his own anti-heroic formulation. And there, if anywhere, lies a cause of my unease, which is impersonal and theoretical. If intellectual practice is really so modestly specified, after all, what position can it sustain? This reduced idea of the intellectual, like the abstract 'perspective of culture' with which he now very plausibly associates it, is a piece of algebra: y to the other's x , it is a cipher awaiting its substantive critical value.

II. DOING CULTURAL CRITICISM

But perhaps this smacks too much of theory, views, positions, all the effigies of thinking against which Collini the historian has repeatedly warned his audience. At such moments, he echoes those parts of *Culture and Society* where the effort of thinking appears to be privileged over the determinate sense of what is thought. Yet Williams's unambiguous object was the formation of a contemporary discourse. Not an autonomous exercise in historical inquiry or a survey, his book was for a time planned alternatively, as a systematic reconstruction and critique, whose pilot version had appeared as 'The Idea of Culture'.¹⁵ Collini's studies in nineteenth-century and later liberalism, which made up a good part of his specialist writing in the 1980s, share historical personnel with Williams—notably Mill and Arnold—but little else, in theme, treatment or purpose. Whereas Williams attended nearly exclusively to texts and their arguments, Collini has come to emphasize the material and moral phenomena of what he calls 'voice'. Utterance rather than statement takes priority in his analyses, which are striking equally for their attention to the conditions of intellectual practice and their confirmed sense of what finally matters in thought.

The voice of thought

'Voice' is a notation for the communicative event as a whole, including the determinate social-cultural relations between writers and readerships, and the pattern of constraint and opportunity inscribed in a given form of communication, which are co-constitutive of a text and its meaning. Collini's reconstruction of 'the world of the Victorian intellectual', with its accounts of incomes, career paths, publishing opportunities

¹⁵ In *Essays in Criticism*, 1 (1953), pp. 239–66.

and institutional circuits—including a brilliant evocation of the London Athenæum in the 1850s and 60s—shows how much is lost in any history of mere ‘ideas’. In its associated meaning, ‘voice’ directs us to persons, underpinning a distinctive ordering of priorities in the evaluation of thought. The voice of a text is realized in its ‘preferred register and habitual strategies’. As the metaphor suggests, it identifies a writer rather than a genre, and what it communicates, beyond the paraphrasable ideas, is a sensibility. Collini’s interest in voice is not only an enriching development in the historical understanding of thought; it defines a committed moral stance. Introducing his monograph on Arnold, he writes: ‘rather than providing a comprehensive summary of [his] “views”, I have throughout concentrated on characterizing the tone and temper of his mind and the distinctive style in which it expressed itself . . . [It] is on account of the qualities embodied in his elusive but recognizable literary “voice”, rather than of any body of “doctrine”, that he continues to be such rewarding company for us.’¹⁶ Opening *Public Moralists*, he summarizes his topic as ‘the development of English moral and cultural attitudes, and their bearing on political argument’ across his chosen span, and then sets out the more strenuous implication of the morality of voice: ‘our understanding of this aspect of our history, and still more the manner and tone in which we write about it, are consequential, albeit in a limited way for our sense of identity and conduct in the present’.¹⁷

Manner, tone, identity, conduct and, elsewhere, again in relation to Arnold, ‘spirit’, which Collini elaborates as ‘a cast of mind, but of more than mind—a temper, a way, at once emotional, intellectual and psychological, of possessing one’s experience and conducting one’s life’.¹⁸ So the algebraic series continues, but now with the unmistakable suggestion that cultural criticism is the public illustration of essentially personal dispositions.

Criticism as portraiture

Collini dislodges ideas from their common-sense status as the first test of intellectual *virtù*. The subjective conditions of good judgement are not given in the concepts it deploys—a moral conviction with a strong practical corollary in his writing, which, as he says himself, tends spontaneously towards the essayistic. His rhetoric, neither aspiring to system nor valuing it in others, is one of occasions, which are given by ‘culturally

¹⁶ *Arnold*, p. viii.

¹⁷ *Public Moralists*, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Arnold*, p. 5.

pre-formed objects' and the avowedly personal engagements they permit or demand.¹⁹ The objects he chooses, and the qualities he brings to his encounters with them, suggest a further specification of his work. All but two of the sixteen essays in *English Pasts*, the book that best represents his current intellectual practice, were developed from reviews, and of the works reviewed some two-thirds are biographies, memoirs, edited correspondence or institutional studies.²⁰ To these he brings his considerable powers of observation and empathy, and a gift of mockery to complement that of appreciation. Collini is a natural in the form he practises to such arresting effect, the intellectual portrait.

Collini's portraiture is a strong option, integrating ideas with a personality and a life, and thus favouring an order of treatment that does not lend itself to critical reconstruction of the thought. In this way, his practice honours its unargued premise, which, notwithstanding its specific role in disagreements about historical method, has a recognizable antecedent in one of the central commonplaces of literary-liberal culture in the twentieth century: the responsibility of 'literature' and its attendant values in the face of 'ideology'. Literature, in this scheme, is to public discourse what the individual person is to the social order, the limit of classifying presumption. In England in the early twentieth century, this was the shared belief of the Bloomsbury circle: when they protested that they were not the 'Group' as which they became notorious, but merely 'friends', they spoke no more than their ideological truth. That truth passed into general intellectual currency after the Second World War, becoming a topic of literary journalism and not least, today, of the public conversation to which Collini has devoted his cultural criticism.

Tone and other cruces

If the idea of portraiture seems to define Collini's characteristic relation to his subjects, the model of conversation, which he sees and admires in Arnold's essays, accounts for his form of address, the writer-reader relations he works towards in his prose. Portraits are of persons; conversations engage persons on terms of relative familiarity, favouring shared over contested values. Conversational portraiture, as criticism, is a variety of performance art with few more accomplished exponents than

¹⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Essay as Form', *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, New York 1991, pp. 3-23.

²⁰ *English Pasts: Essays in Culture and History*, Oxford 1999.

Stefan Collini. While no single instance can be taken as definitive, there is particular interest and topicality in a recent one: an essay prompted by a book on George Orwell and billed by the *London Review of Books* as 'Christopher Hitchens, Englishman'.²¹

Hitchens rather than Orwell is indeed the subject, and Collini's theme and treatment are alike well caught in his title, "No Bullshit" Bullshit'. This is an essay about a posture and a certain English intellectual sensibility. Thus, Collini does not dwell for long on the aporia of contrarianism, or 'the animating illusion' that there is never moral strength in numbers, or the romanticism of self-proclaimed 'independence'. His only reference to Hitchens's support for Bush's wars of aggression is the glancing comment that 'too irritable an aversion from one's self-righteously "radical" associates can lead one into some very unlovely company.' The wording of this caution eases readers past the political crisis to which it alludes and into the heart of things, the matter of 'tone' in English culture. Collini writes perceptively about Hitchens's swelling Englishness, and with proper candour, noting the moments of bristling anti-intellectualism and nativist prejudice. He also notes a certain machismo, which he associates with a fixation on public school experience (though not, as also seems possible, with the hard-boiled school of journalism).

But what is most striking in this essay is its hyperbolic re-enactment, in its own textual space, of the sensibility it lays open for critical inspection. Pugilistic images recur throughout (including a highly specialized reference to 'watching an old video of a one-sided boxing match'). In a related trope, Hitchens is squared off against two other 'master' reviewers, Martin Amis and Frank Kermode—'a tough poker table to ask anyone to sit at', it seems. Other elements of the rhetoric are distinctly English. Hitchens gives Orwell's detractors a 'duffing-up', and Raymond Williams 'is taken behind the bike shed for a particularly nasty going-over'. Collini speaks fluent Bikeshed. 'No one can accuse [Hitchens] of only picking on boys his own size', or of correct relations with 'fags and booze', he reports. 'Yikes!' he exclaims at one juncture, in noisy homage to the public school novels of his boyhood.

No doubt this is high-spirited irony, in a writer who values high spirits and irony alike. The closing judgement, though witty, is grave enough. Yet irony is ambiguous as a resource for criticism. Just as it unsettles

²¹ "No Bullshit" Bullshit', *London Review of Books*, 23 January 2003.

what it appears to maintain, so, in another regard, it spares what it shows to be vulnerable. The irony of irony is that its critical power of displacement remains mere potential while it persists, taking effect only when it stops. But Collini's last word, in keeping with the rhetoric of the essay as a whole, is Hitchens's own: 'bullshit', a vulgarism that illustrates as well as any the phatic, bonding function of language and the adaptive, convivial face of irony.

The idea of 'company' is important to Collini (it has appeared twice already, and will appear again), and his rhetoric serves it faithfully, articulating critical judgement in a shared cultural code that continues to be valued as such. In a brilliantly executed closing paragraph, he pictures Hitchens, returned from a day of horse and hounds, sitting in a pub with Kingsley Amis, Philip Larkin and Robert Conquest, among 'other red-coated, red-faced riders increasingly comfortable in their prejudices and their Englishness'. He continues: 'They would be good company, up to a point, but their brand of saloon-bar frivolity is only a quick sharpener away from philistinism, and I would be sorry to think of one of the essayists I have most enjoyed reading in recent decades turning into a no-two-ways-about-it-let's-face-it bore. I just hope he doesn't go on one hunt too many and find himself, as twilight gathers and the fields fall silent, lying face down in his own bullshit.'

The conceit is an old English Christmas card morphed into caricature. But Collini is not Steve Bell, and his tone, not hostile, is that of saddened reproof. The burden of his judgement remains inexplicit—'elusive', as he would say of Arnold, or perhaps just not fully public in the expected way. The tension in the passage is that of a bond strained but unbroken. This is criticism as home truths.

Home truths

Home truths have force but little scope. As expressions of crisis in an inescapable relationship, they cannot be ignored, however little truth they actually contain. But for the same reason, their goal is correction, nothing more. They illustrate the limitations of reflexivity strictly understood, and make too modest a template for criticism. The social relations of capitalism are not inescapable, as some at least of the resources termed 'cultural' survive to remind us; the possibility of transformation has not disappeared from history. What Collini makes of this proposition

I cannot say. It seems clear, however, that he is little moved by the thought that specifically political contentions might mediate choices of fundamental and positive human significance, and it would be surprising if this strategic hesitation had no bearing on his sense of critical stakes. The terms of evaluation that he brings to public discourse are scarcely political, even where politics is the matter in hand, and not 'cultural' either, in any telling sense: their common denominator is their association with the private sphere. Ideas count for less than the voices that circulate them and the sensibilities that vary their texture. Conversation is a model of public discourse. Cultural and political relationships that cannot be reduced to inter-personal terms are nevertheless appraised for their quality as company. It was one of Hitchens's imagined company, Philip Larkin, who wrote that 'home' begins as 'a joyous shot at how things ought to be'.²² Cultural criticism, as Collini voices it, shares something of that indoor utopianism, making a complementary investment in the moral example of friends at table. His moralist is a private face in a public place. It is as though public discourse must learn from a certain kind of commensality—intelligent, decent, and always essentially intimate, even when the talk is of collective crises. What is disavowed here—known, indubitably, yet somehow not consistently imagined—is the specifically social reality of public discourse and its structuring conflicts. At one with the times in this at least, it is another kind of privatization.

A world outside

Collini is at pains to defend the 'standing' and 'legitimacy' of his cultural criticism, as if believing that there would be plausibility or point in attacking it on those terms. He insists that this intellectual practice is none the worse for not being 'politics', leaving at least one reader to wonder who has been maintaining the contrary position. No, the simple question is how far it reaches *as criticism*, and how consequentially. The answer as I see it is, not very. The record of English cultural liberalism, to which Collini affiliates his work, has been variable in this decisive respect. Leavis based his assessments of the contemporary situation on a strong theory of historical modernity, from which he also derived the strategy and tactics of a cultural politics. That the theory was false and the politics desperate—and, increasingly, reactionary—is not the whole

²² 'Home Is So Sad' (1958), *Collected Poems*, London 1988, p. 119.

point his critical practice was decided, biting, and, for many, an inspiration. Hoggart reinscribed a variety of that practice in the strategic narrative of the British labour movement, as an oblique reflection on its want of cultural percipience and ambition, its vulnerability to the intensifying commodification of popular life. His critical perspective guided a lifetime's work in cultural policy and administration. Collini seems closer to Hoggart than to any other figure in his twentieth-century tradition, while leaving far less tangible evidence of specific commitments or aspirations.²³ Having limited patience with theories and little taste for partisan division, he depends on his own resources, in a practice of criticism that is in all senses personal, and even private. In doing so, he defines a quietist variation in the movement of metacultural discourse, whose forms he retraces in all but the most important respect. Making no presumptuous metapolitical claims on public discourse, and harbouring no illusion that it already represents something better than it appears to, he slips through it as through something insubstantial, something not really there.

²³ See his discussion of Hoggart in *English Past*, pp. 219–30.



FORREST HYLTON

AN EVIL HOUR

Uribe's Colombia in Historical Perspective

WITH ÁLVARO URIBE VÉLEZ's inauguration as President of Colombia on 7 August 2002, the outlaws have become the establishment. Uribe's father, Alberto Uribe Sierra, had been languishing in debt in the middle-class Medellín neighbourhood of Laureles, in the mid-1970s, when a strange reversal of fortune catapulted him to wealth and influence as political broker and real-estate intermediary for the narco-traffickers, boasting extensive cattle ranches in Antioquia and Córdoba. Uribe Sierra was connected by marriage to the Ochoas, an elite family that joined the upwardly mobile *contrabandistas arribistas* to form the Medellín cartel; when Pablo Escobar launched his 'Medellín without slums' campaign in 1982, Uribe Sierra organized a fundraising horse race to help out. Uribe *filis* was removed from his post as mayor of Medellín for his conspicuous attendance at a meeting of the region's drug cartel at Escobar's *hacienda*, Nápoles. When his father was murdered at his ranch in 1983, leaving behind debts of around \$10 million, Álvaro Uribe flew there in Escobar's helicopter. During his tenure as governor of Antioquia, between 1995 and 1997, Uribe's 'Montesinos'—to borrow a phrase from Alfredo Molano—was Pedro Juan Moreno Villa, alleged by a former us DEA chief to be the country's leading importer of potassium permanganate, the main chemical precursor in the manufacture of cocaine.¹

This is Washington's leading exponent of the 'war on drugs and terror' in the Western hemisphere. In April 2003 the us Congress awarded Uribe an extra \$104 million, on top of the \$2 billion that has already been disbursed since 1999 under Plan Colombia. Whereas elsewhere in Latin America the IMF issues stern demands for fiscal surplus,

Colombia's special needs are treated with indulgence and its military expenditure thoughtfully excluded from the public-sector cutbacks the Fund requires. For the well-known statistics of Colombia's spiralling violence also mark it out from all other Latin American countries. By the mid-1990s, the homicide rate had soared to world-record heights: 72 per 100,000 inhabitants, compared to 24.6 for Brazil, 20 for Mexico, 11.5 for Peru and 8 for the US. Homicide is the leading cause of death among men and the second leading cause among women.² An average of twenty political killings were committed daily in 2001, up from fourteen per day in 2000—although it should be pointed out that most of these take place within five or six specific zones. Over half the world's annual kidnappings occur in Colombia. In 2001, 90 per cent of all trade-union activists murdered were killed there. The country has the third highest number of internal refugees in the world with over 2.9 million, out of a population of nearly 45 million, driven from their homes in the countryside; it is no exaggeration to say that it is rapidly becoming a place with nowhere to run and nowhere to hide.

Uribe's inauguration ceremony was famously marked by nineteen mortar-bombs fired in his direction by FARC guerrillas; symbolically, these failed to do much damage to the Presidential Palace but killed twenty-one people in the nearby slums. Again, in contrast to El Salvador or Peru, the Colombian state has succeeded neither in neutralizing nor defeating its guerrilla insurgencies, intact since the 1960s. The FARC, or Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, with multiple bases and a stronghold in the southeast, has an estimated 16,000–18,000 combatants. The ELN, or Ejército de Liberación Nacional, mainly centred in the oil regions of the northeast and the Caribbean export zones, has between 5,000 and 7,000. Their longevity parallels the exclusion of popular demands from the mainstream political system: whereas elsewhere mass mobilizations have created new parties, forced changes in policy or overthrown governments, in Colombia neither urban populism nor social democracy has ever been allowed to emerge as a national force.

¹ See Joseph Contreras, with the collaboration of Fernando Garavito, *El Señor de las Sombras: Biografía no autorizada de Álvaro Uribe Vélez*, Bogotá 2000, pp. 35–43, 65–72, 92, 167. Contreras is *Newsweek's* Latin American editor, and Garavito a Colombian political columnist recently driven into exile by paramilitary death threats. For Molano, see 'Peor el remedio', *El Espectador*, 1 September 2002.

² Andrés Villaveces, 'Appendix: A Comparative Statistical Note on Homicide Rates in Colombia', in Charles Bergquist et al., eds, *Violence in Colombia, 1990–2000: Waging War and Negotiating Peace*, Wilmington 2001, pp. 275–80.

Yet this is no dictatorship. With presidential elections held like clock-work every four years, Colombia's constitutional democracy can boast the longest running two-party system in Latin America; despite the fact that the two factions have often shed each other's blood, the classic political paradigm—structured, along Iberian lines, by an oligarchic division between Conservatives and Liberals—persists to this day. The system was, of course, characteristic of the newly independent Latin American states of the early nineteenth century where a ruling elite of landowners, lawyers and merchants, manipulating a restricted suffrage in which those who had the vote were clients rather than citizens, typically split into two wings. Conservatives were devoted first and foremost to order, and—like their counterparts in Europe—religion, in close alliance with the Catholic Church. Liberals declared themselves in favour of progress, and were on the whole anti-clerical. Economically speaking, landed wealth tended to be more Conservative; commercial fortunes more Liberal. This civilian division, in turn, would be punctuated or cross-cut by *pronunciamientos* and seizures of power by rival military chieftains, in the name—but not always with the assent—of one or other of the opposing political parties.

Elsewhere, however, by the early twentieth century, this pattern had started to give way to a modern urban politics, in which radical coalitions or populist parties mobilized newly awakened masses with calls for basic social change. Throughout the rest of the continent, accelerated urbanization and pressure from agrarian reforms led to a decline in the political weight of the landed fraction of the ruling class. In Colombia alone, a Conservative-Liberal dyarchy has survived nearly a hundred years longer, remaining outwardly intact down to the twenty-first century—and this despite legislative elections governed by the rules of proportional representation. The singularity of this phenomenon is not confined to Latin America; in effect, no other party system in the world can boast a continuity comparable to the Colombian. Perhaps the simplest way of grasping the extraordinary character of the oligarchy is to list the kinship ties of its modern presidents. Mariano Ospina Rodríguez (1857–61) was the first self-declared Conservative President of Colombia, in the epoch of Palmerston; his son Pedro Nel Ospina held the same office in that of Baldwin (1922–26); his grandson Mariano Ospina Pérez, in that of Attlee (1946–50). Alfonso López Pumarejo, the most significant Liberal President of modern times, was a contemporary of Roosevelt (1934–38, and again 1942–45); his son Alfonso López

Michelsen, was President (1974–78) in the time of Ford and Carter. Alberto Lleras Camargo, another Liberal, was President in the days of the Alliance for Progress (1958–62); his cousin Carlos Lleras Restrepo during the Vietnam War (1966–70). The Conservative Misael Pastrana succeeded him (1970–74); twenty years later his son Andrés Pastrana took up the reins of power (1998–2002). If Presidential candidates, as well as winners, were included, the list would be yet longer. Álvaro Gómez Hurtado, the Conservative party's standard-bearer in 1974 and 1986, was the son of Laureano Gómez (1950–53), the most extreme of all Conservative Presidents. How could this oligarchy, excluding all class rivals, defy a course of extinction for so long? What relation does it bear to the ineradicability of the relatively small guerrilla forces—and to the consolidation of the murderous paramilitaries? No conclusive answers have been offered to these questions, but a key to the modern agony of Colombia must lie here.

The oligarchy

Originally, the division between Liberals and Conservatives had a rational ideological foundation in Colombian society. Liberals were lay-minded members of the landed and merchant elite, hostile to what was perceived as the clerical and militarist compromises of the last period of Bolívar's career as Liberator. Conservatives, who initially had closer links to the colonial aristocracy or officialdom, stood for centralized order and the social controls of religion. Ideas mattered in disputes between the two, starting with the Santander government's directive that Bentham's treatises on civil and penal legislation be mandatory study in the University of Bogotá, as early as 1825—inconceivable in England itself even fifty years later. Furious clerical reaction eventually led to the reintroduction of the Jesuits, who had been expelled from the colonies by the Spanish monarchy in 1767, to run the secondary schools; and then their re-expulsion in 1850.³

But the clash was not just over questions of education; nor was it a purely intra-elite affair. The Liberal Revolution of 1849–53 involved risings of peasants against Conservative *hacendados* in the Cauca Valley, and mobilization of artisans stirred by the Parisian barricades of 1848

³ Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia. Fragmented Land, Divided Society*, New York and Oxford 2002, pp. 115, 126, 142, 151, 204.

and the writings of Proudhon and Louis Blanc.⁴ As in Europe, the Liberals abandoned their craftsmen supporters to the rigours of free trade, and dissolved communally held indigenous lands. But by their own lights, they remained committed to radical reforms. Slavery and the death penalty were abolished, church and state separated, clerical quit-rents lifted, divorce legalized, the army reduced, and universal male suffrage introduced; one province even—for a surreal split second—granted women the vote, a world-historical first.

It was this barrage of measures that forced a more intransigent and explicit Conservatism into being, determined to roll back as many of these changes as it could. The sequestration of Church lands by Mosquera, and passage of a decentralizing constitution, led to the vicious Conservative backlash known as the Regeneration under Rafael Núñez; initiating, in 1880, five decades of extreme reaction. The constitution of 1886 enshrined the power of the centre, giving the President the authority to appoint provincial governors. The new concordat with the Vatican ensured a tight link with the most authoritarian currents of the Church, which dispatched successive waves of battle-hardened zealots from other theatres of struggle—European or Latin American—to fortify the faith in Colombia. At the end of the century, the Regeneration regimes crushed Liberal resistance in the murderous War of a Thousand Days (1899–1903), leaving 100,000 dead, and jettisoned Panama to the us.

Topography of clientelism

Why does this pre-history of twentieth-century Colombia still matter so much? Because it set the parameters for national politics down to the threshold of the 1960s—and, by perpetuating Liberal and Conservative identities, even now fixes public life in a peculiar rigor mortis. The reasons for such persistence clearly have much to do with topography: extreme geographical differentiation has always been an inescapable

⁴ For a pioneering treatment of the development of Afro-liberalism, indigenous conservatism, and Antioquian settler conservatism in the Cauca after 1848, see James Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*, Durham, NC forthcoming. Nancy Applebaum's innovative *Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846–1948*, Durham, NC 2003, goes beyond economic debates on Antioquian settlers to examine the role of white supremacy in the cultural formation of a colonizing *paisa* identity along the 'coffee axis' (*el eje cafetero*).

factor of Colombian politics. The country is rent by three great mountain ranges fanning up from the south, themselves split by the watercourses of the Cauca and Magdalena. To the southeast, it opens out onto a vast expanse of tropical lowlands, straddling the equator and crisscrossed by innumerable rivers draining into the Orinoco and Amazon basins. To the north and west lie the Caribbean and Pacific coasts and the impenetrable jungle of the Panamanian Isthmus, while the country's principal oil reserves lie in the easterly province of Arauca, fronting the Venezuelan border. The majority of the population has always been concentrated in the cooler and sub-tropical mountainous regions; Bogotá, at 8,660 feet above sea level, has an average temperature of 57°F (14°C). But the cities themselves were for centuries separated by tortuous roads and snow-capped peaks; as they remain, for those who cannot afford air travel.

This is a configuration that has awarded traditional elites an exceptional logistical advantage in imposing parochial clientelistic controls from above, while blocking nationwide mobilizations from below. But poor transport and geographical isolation have also had a critical shaping effect on the ruling groups themselves. Centralized military control was inherently more difficult in Colombia than in its neighbours: relative to population, the army was always about a third of the size of that in Peru or Ecuador.⁵ Civilian parties—and the church—thus became much more important as transmission belts of power than elsewhere. But they could not escape the logic of territorial fragmentation, either.

Although the country was divided between two great political loyalties, these showed no systematic regional pattern. A few zones did exhibit a clear-cut predominance of one or other party early on: the Caribbean littoral was Liberal, Antioquia was Conservative. But these were the exceptions. The rule was a much more intricate quilt of local rivalries at the micro-level of small communities or townships, cheek by jowl within each region. This had two consequences. Liberals and Conservatives were from the start, and have remained, highly factional as nationwide organizations. But what they lost in horizontal cohesion, they have gained in vertical grip on their followers, as the intense material and ideological forces of their mutual contention were applied in intimate grass-roots settings; the exceptional strength of Colombian clientelism no doubt owes much to the particular localization of these pressures.

⁵ James Payne, *Patterns of Conflict in Colombia*, New Haven 1968, pp. 121–2.

Another feature of the Colombian countryside both reinforced this clientelism and gave it an unusual political twist. The country emerged from the wars of independence as one of the most disunited and economically depressed of the new Latin American nations, with miserable communications, little foreign trade and very low fiscal capacity. It was the discovery, from the 1870s, that large parts of its highlands were ideal terrain for the cultivation of coffee that gave it a major export staple, generating substantial earnings and transforming the prospects for growth of the economy. Starting in Santander as an extension of Venezuelan coffee farms, the crop spread westwards into Cundinamarca and then into Tolima and Antioquia by the end of the century. Within another two decades, the country had become the world's second biggest producer after Brazil.

But the pattern of its coffee economy was distinctive. In Brazil, or for that matter Guatemala, large plantations worked by indebted peasants or wage-labourers predominated. In Colombia such estates were more modest and had less weight in the pattern of cultivation while medium or small holdings were much more numerous, if not to the same extent as in Costa Rica. Compared with the great *fazendas* of São Paulo or Paraná, the social base of coffee agriculture in Antioquia or Santander, if still highly unequal, was, measured in terms of land ownership, more 'democratic'. With important regional exceptions, such as Cundinamarca and Tolima, production was controlled not by planters, who faced continuous labour shortages, but by peasant families working on small- and medium-sized plots at mid-level altitudes of between 1000 and 2000 metres. The commercialization of the crop, however, was always in the hands of a wealthy elite, which could advance credit to small farmers, purchase their output and finance its export.

Small producers were thus often thrust into conflict with merchant-creditors and real-estate speculators over land titles and terms of sale for their crop. Profit margins depended on the maintenance of an oligarchic monopoly, in the market as much as in party politics.⁶ Even on large

⁶ Mariano Arango, *Los funerales de Antioquia la grande*, Medellín 1990, and *Café e Industria 1850-1930*, Bogotá 1977; Michael F. Jiménez, 'Traveling Far in Grandfather's Car: The Life Cycle of Central Colombian Coffee Estates: The Case of Viotá, 1900-30', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 69, no. 2 (1989), pp. 185-219; 'At the Banquet of Civilization: The Limits of Planter Hegemony in Early-Twentieth-Century Colombia,' in William Roseberry et al., eds, *Coffee, Society, and*

estates in Cundinamarca, landlord-merchants had to contend with fractious tenants who poached, smuggled, squatted, dealt in moonshine and rioted over tax hikes.⁷ But the general interconnexion between small-holdings below and powerful distributors above which distinguished the structure of the coffee sector in Colombia tended to reproduce traditional ties of dependence in modernized forms, reinforcing the bonds of clientelism.

Into the twentieth century

The richest of all coffee regions was Antioquia, famous for its ultramontane allegiances. The long ascendancy of the Conservatives, in a period where nearly everywhere else in Latin America they were in retreat or eclipse, had an economic foundation in the coffee export boom, which catapulted the merchant-industrialists of Medellín, the most Catholic and reactionary of Colombia's cities, to national pre-eminence. The country thus entered the world economy under the leadership of the most socially regressive elements of its elite, at a time when elsewhere free-market Liberals looking to secularize civic life had typically gained the upper hand. Just as organized labour was starting to make itself felt in much of the rest of the continent, Conservative rule was given a new lease of life by the coffee boom. Production jumped from 1 million sacks in 1913 to 2 million in 1921 and 3 million in 1930. During the same period, Wall Street opened generous lines of credit in what became known among Colombians as the 'Dance of the Millions'—refreshing the elite but bringing no respite to struggling hill-farmers, tenants and sharecroppers.⁸ By this time, however, signs of a new popular radicalism were stirring.

In 1914, a sharecropper named Quintín Lame was nominated Supreme Leader of the indigenous tribes of Colombia (though he did not speak

Power in Latin America, Baltimore 1995, pp. 262–93, and *Struggles on an Interior Shore*, Durham, NC forthcoming. Following Catherine LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia 1850–1936*, Albuquerque, NM 1986, p. 207, the term 'peasant' refers to 'small rural cultivators who rely on family labour to produce what they consume. Sharecroppers, service tenants, small proprietors, and frontier settlers would, by this definition, all be called peasants.'

⁷ Jiménez, *Struggles on an Interior Shore*.

⁸ Malcolm Deas, 'The Fiscal Problems of Nineteenth-Century Colombia', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1982), pp. 287–328, Vernon Lee Fluharty, *Dance of the Millions: Military Rule and the Social Revolution in Colombia*, Pittsburgh 1957.

Nasa, the language of his people). Lame had fought on the Liberal side in the War of a Thousand Days. Due to his organizing efforts, he would spend the next decade in and out of prison; but the movement he led, known as the Quintinada, gained ground through the tactic of collective land occupations which swept through southern Colombia from the Cauca into Tolima. In the late 1920s and early 1930s peasants took the offensive throughout the coffee frontier. The political mood was now markedly different, as anarcho-syndicalist and socialist ideas finally began to make headway in the labour movement following the Mexican and Russian Revolutions and the First World War. In 1926, the first political vehicle independent of Liberal and Conservative Party tutelage, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR), began to organize proletarian struggle in the export enclaves of the Caribbean and along the coffee frontiers. The PSR's second vice-president, Raúl Eduardo Mahecha—a tailor who, like Quintín Lame, was a Liberal veteran of the War of a Thousand Days—helped found the oil workers' union, USO, and led a strike against Tropical Oil (a Jersey Standard subsidiary) in the Magdalena Medio in 1926. The party's first vice-president, María Cano, daughter of an oligarchic media family from Medellín, toured the countryside from 1925–27. With Mahecha, she led the 4,000-strong banana workers' strike against United Fruit near Santa Marta in November–December 1928. In 1929, the PSR's 'Bolsheviks of Lfbano' rose up in a failed insurrection in southern Tolima; the first explicitly socialist rebellion in Colombia, it represented an alliance that radical artisans and provincial intellectuals had formed with tenants, sharecroppers and smallholders.

In the version of the 1928 banana workers' strike immortalized by Gabriel García Márquez in *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, thousands were massacred and loaded onto boxcars, and the memory of the repression erased by official oblivion.⁹ In reality, the incident was thoroughly investigated and publicized by a young lawyer trained in Italian positivist criminology. As a deputy in the lower house of Congress, Jorge Eliécer

⁹ Eduardo Posada Carbó, 'Fiction as History: The *bananeros* and Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 30, part 2 (1998), pp. 395–414. Marco Palacios notes the lack of consensus over the exact number massacred: the North American consul put the figure at 1,000, the strike leader Alberto Castrillón at 1,500, and the general in charge of the massacre at 47; see *Entre la legitimidad y la violencia: Colombia 1875–1994*, Bogotá 1995, p. 120. David Bushnell, citing Roberto Herrera Soto and Rafael Romero Castañeda, considers the number of 60 to 75 'definitive': *The Making of Modern Colombia: a Nation in Spite of Itself*, Berkeley 1993, p. 180.

Gaitán used the massacre to launch his career as the first populist politician within the Liberal Party.¹⁰ In his study of Gaitán, Herbert Braun labelled him, accurately, as a petit-bourgeois reformer; but by giving official voice to popular demands and placing the 'social question' at the centre of national parliamentary debate, he earned the enmity of the dominant, oligarchic fraction of his own party as well as that of the Conservative far right.¹¹ Gaitán broke from the Liberals in 1933 to found the National Union of the Revolutionary Left, UNIR, and approved the founding of peasant leagues to compete with those sponsored by the Liberal Party—and, crucially, with those of the Partido Socialista Democrático, the local Communist Party.¹²

The PSD had been founded in 1930 by leaders of the PSR, two of whom, José Gonzalo Sánchez and Dimas Luna, had led the Quintinada in the early 1920s. With a strong indigenous influence, the PSD gave top priority to peasant struggles on the coffee frontiers, especially in Tolima and Cundinamarca, where the largest plantations were owned by merchant-bankers from Bogotá, as well as Germans and North Americans. The PSD set up peasant leagues to capitalize on the wave of land occupations that swept across the countryside from 1928; by the early 1930s it had won considerable political legitimacy by forging a 'revolutionary agrarianism focusing on the formation and protection of autonomous smallholder communities'.¹³ Gaitán accused the PSD of skipping stages of historical development: while communist peasant leagues aspired to usher in the socialist revolution, UNIR's were designed to remove the feudal blocks on the development of capitalist agriculture. The countryside was hotly contested political terrain in the early 1930s and—this was the Comintern's sectarian Third Period—the PSD viewed UNIR as its principal political opponent, especially in Tolima and Cundinamarca.

¹⁰ See W. John Green, *Gaitanismo, Left Liberalism and Popular Mobilization in Colombia*, Gainesville, FL 2003.

¹¹ Herbert Braun, *The Assassination of Gaitán: Public Life and Urban Violence in Colombia*, Madison 1986, pp. 8–9, 45–6, 54–5. Braun contends that Gaitanismo had little impact on organized labour, but Green has shown otherwise.

¹² Gonzalo Sánchez, 'Las Ligas Campesinas en Colombia', in *Ensayos de historia social y política del siglo xx*, pp. 152–68.

¹³ Marc Chernick and Michael Jiménez, 'Popular Liberalism, Radical Democracy, and Marxism: Leftist Politics in Contemporary Colombia, 1974–1991', in Barry Carr and Steven Ellner, eds, *The Latin American Left: From the Fall of Allende to Perestroika*, Boulder 1993, p. 66.

A New Deal?

Meanwhile, a decisive shift had occurred in elite politics. In 1929 coffee prices plunged from thirty to seventeen cents a pound, threatening a disaster for the export-based economy that was consummated in October's Wall Street Crash. Simultaneously, the Conservatives split, as church leaders openly backed rival candidates for the elections of 1930. With the economic basis of their hegemony gone, and their political cohesion broken, the door was left open for the Liberals to regain the Presidency after fifty years in the wilderness. Their candidate, Olaya Herrera, had been Ambassador in Washington under the Conservatives, with whom he enjoyed good relations, and his vote was less than that of the Conservative rivals combined. There were no startling policy departures. But four years later, when the Liberals won again—unopposed: the Conservatives boycotted the election—their leader was the scion of a rich banking family, Alfonso López Pumarejo, billed by admirers as the Roosevelt of the Andes.

The 'Revolution on the March' proclaimed by López was a limited affair, more sweeping in its rhetoric than its reforms.⁴ But taxation went up, more was spent on schools and roads, and labour legislation was liberalized, which opened the gates to a growth in unionization. Most effort was invested in revising the Constitution of 1886 to ensure separation of church and state. This was enough to pull Gaitán back into the Liberal fold in 1935, and prompt the PSD, in line with Popular Front policies, to throw its weight behind the López regime, demobilizing its peasant leagues and renouncing its vanguard ambitions. With the support of the PSD, which dominated the trade unions, López created the Central Workers' Confederation (CRC) in 1936, with the aim of turning organized labour into a clientelist bloc under control of the Liberal Party.

After two years in office, López called a halt to any further reforms. The most significant measure he had introduced was Law 200, passed in 1936, establishing effective occupancy of land as a legal basis for tenure. It has been argued that this partial victory of coffee workers—it was very partial: the landlords benefited far more—in securing access

⁴ For a healthily sceptical view, see Richard Stoller, 'Alfonso López Pumarejo and Liberal Radicalism in 1930s Colombia', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 27 (1995), pp. 367–97.

to frontier lands in the 1930s led, ironically, to the isolation of more militant trade unions in other sectors, such as oil and transport: however strong these grew, they were unable to affect this central area of the economy; hence the subsequent fragmentation of the labour movement as a whole and, in consequence, the strengthening of the two traditional parties. Whereas in other parts of Latin America a mobilized peasantry would play a key role in radical class alliances, once the Colombian coffee growers had their family plots—so this hypothesis runs—workers' solidarity disappeared, and intra-class competition to avoid proletarianization, mediated by the clientelist practices of the two parties, took a bloody turn.¹⁵ Though this should be qualified—there were some Gaitanist and PSD tenants and sharecroppers in Viotá (Cundinamarca) and Barrancabermeja (Santander), root-stock of the later FARC and ELN—the *Violencia* of the post-war decades cannot be understood without recognizing the dependent incorporation of the majority of coffee-growers into the clientelist apparatus of each party.

The 'Liberal Republic' lasted till 1946. During the second López administration of 1942–45, embroiled in corruption, those reforms—the eight-hour day, social security—that had not been a dead letter for organized labour were rolled back and the limited land programme reversed with Law 100. By the early 1940s a consensus had emerged among the Colombian elite that it was time for a return to liberal economic orthodoxy. Social welfare and pro-labour policies would have no place in the new order. Medellín, where the Unión de Trabajadores de Colombia was set up by the Church in 1946, was to be the model for the nation. In 1944, the city's Conservative manufacturing elite formed ANDI, the national industrialists' organization, and in 1945 coffee merchants founded FEDERCAFE. Though they had their differences over the next decade, these

¹⁵ This is the fundamental thesis of Charles Bergquist, 'The Labor Movement (1930–46) and the Violence', in Bergquist et al, eds, *The Violence in Colombia: the Contemporary Crisis in Historical Perspective*, Wilmington 1992, pp. 69, 195. While the 'Revolution on the March' was certainly bourgeois, it was in no way democratic, privileging property holders over squatters, tenants, sharecroppers and smallholders. Though the latter groups attempted to use the law in their favour, landlords had the upper hand and were able to expand their holdings through a mixture of private and public violence. For a view of coffee and smallholding that questions Bergquist's structural determinism, see W. John Green, 'Sibling Rivalry on the Left and Labour Struggles in Colombia during the 1940s', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2000); and Michael Jiménez, 'The Many Deaths of the Colombian Revolution', *Columbia Papers on Latin America*, no. 13, 1990.

groups, joined by intermarriage, would subsequently dictate economic policy to successive governments behind the public's back.¹⁶

Between 1945 and 1950, demonstrations were smashed in Bogotá and Cali, strikes were outlawed, firings authorized, the CRC's legal standing was called into question and the PSD outlawed. In 1945 Alberto Lleras Camargo, who had taken over when López Pumarejo quit before his time was up, smashed the communist-led river workers' strike—their trade union, FEDENAL, having been the most successful and militant in the CRC. In 1946, through the UTC, business unionism—sponsored by employers, the Church and Washington's own Cold War unions—began its rapid ascent. The decade of the 1940s was a brief moment of democratic opening almost everywhere in Latin America, with populists swept into power. In Colombia, it saw an aggressive assault on organized labour.

La Violencia

Only Gaitán—the leading labour lawyer of the day, who had occupied the posts of senator, city councillor, mayor of Bogotá, Minister of Education and of Labour—contested these developments through official channels, winning a huge following among the Liberal electorate. Though the PSD leadership loathed him, Gaitán also had the support of many Party militants and the solid backing of the working class, even in Conservative Catholic strongholds like Medellín. When the Liberal establishment locked him out of contention as the party's candidate for the Presidency in 1946, he ran on his own ticket. The result was to split the Liberal vote down the middle, and let the Conservative candidate, Ospina Pérez, through. Two years later, on 9 April 1948, amid escalating rural violence and deepening repression of organized labour in the towns, Gaitán was assassinated in broad daylight on a street in Bogotá. News of his murder unleashed the largest urban riots in twentieth-century Colombian history, the so-called *Bogotazo*—a storm that swept the provinces as well as the capital.

¹⁶ See Medófilo Medina, 'Violence and Economic Development 1945–50 and 1985–88', in Bergquist et al, *Violence in Colombia: Historical Perspective*, pp. 157–8; Daniel Pécaut, *Guerra Contra la Sociedad*, Bogotá 2000, pp. 58–9; and Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, *La ofensiva empresarial: Industriales, políticos, y violencia en los años 40 en Colombia*, Bogotá 1992.

The period known simply, though misleadingly, as *La Violencia*, is often said to have begun with this drama. But that is to foreshorten it by nearly two decades. To understand its roots, it is necessary to go back to the origins of the Liberal Republic. When Conservative rule came to an end in 1930, tensions long simmering in the countryside began to explode. Memories of the partisan slaughter of the War of the Thousand Days, when Liberal and Conservative notables mobilized peasant militias to kill each other in a struggle that cost the lives of one out of every twenty-five Colombians, were still vivid in many localities. Scarcely had Olaya Herrera taken office, when the fear that the Liberals might now wreak revenge triggered the first spontaneous outbreaks of violence from Conservative smallholders and landlords in Norte de Santander and Boyacá.⁷ Nor were these fears entirely irrational. Once the Liberals were entrenched in power, they did resort to persistent intimidation and fraud. In retaliation, the Conservatives boycotted every presidential election down to 1946. Throughout the Liberal Republic, there was always a menacing background of killings in the *municipios*: political polarization and paramilitary violence were spreading incrementally all through the 1930s and 40s.

But if the logic of the 'defensive feud' between embattled local communities, each with its recollections or fear of grievous injury, was in place from the beginning, two national developments over-determined this underlying dynamic.⁸ The first was the shift in the electoral balance between the two parties, once even a moderate degree of urbanization—and in Colombia it was still quite moderate—had taken hold. The strength of Conservative loyalties had always depended on the influence of the clergy, which was far stronger in small towns and the countryside. Once the proportion of city-dwellers passed a certain threshold, the Liberals started to command a permanent sociological majority. This became clear in the 1946 presidential election itself, which they lost; the two Liberal candidates totalled over 60 per cent of the vote, a level that has been the norm for the Party ever since.

⁷ For a vivid account of these events and their background, see James Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia. The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889–1965*, Gainesville, FL 2001, pp. 183–9. This is now the best narrative history of the period in English. Its main title—perhaps imposed by the publisher—could scarcely be less apposite: the actual focus of the book lies in its subtitle, though it is both less and considerably more than a biography proper.

⁸ The notion of the defensive feud was developed in the classic study by Payne, *Patterns of Conflict in Colombia*, pp. 161–7.

On the Conservative side, loss of power increased the influence of the most extreme wing of the Party, under the charismatic leadership of Laureano Gómez. Dubbed the 'creole Hitler' by his foes, Gómez was seen at the time, and has been since, as a fascist demagogue, driving his party to fanatical extremes and plunging the country into civil war. In fact, in the in-grown world of the Colombian political elite, he had been a good friend of both López Pumarejo and his successor Eduardo Santos, and benefited from the former's financial connexions. In the mid-thirties, he had written blistering attacks on both Mussolini—he particularly disliked the *Duce*—and Hitler. But he was a Catholic integrist. Latin America of the 1930s and 40s was filled with movements and leaders, not all of them reactionary, impressed by the successes of German or Italian fascism: Toro and Busch in Bolivia, Vargas in Brazil, Perón in Argentina. What was distinctive in Colombia was that the same kind of attraction pulled Gómez and his party towards Franco, as a traditionalist and religious version of counter-revolution, free of any of the populist connotations that made the Italian or German regimes seem appealing elsewhere. The result was a rhetorical escalation, to Spanish Civil War levels, of historic enmities towards Liberalism, now represented as virtually indistinguishable from Communism.

This was the combustible setting in which Gaitán was killed. The populism he had sketched on the left flank of Liberalism was a growing threat to the country's oligarchy, which he named as such. But viewed comparatively, it was still relatively weak. The dispersal of the big-city population into at least four regional centres, Bogotá, Medellín, Cali and Barranquilla, none of which had over half a million inhabitants by 1940, deprived a potential Colombian populism of critical mass. He himself noted in 1943 that less than 5 per cent of the country's workforce was unionized. So although the *Bogotazo* was an expression of popular rage, it did not lead to any seizure of power. Rather than overwhelming a weakly guarded Presidential Palace and ousting Ospina, the huge crowds were diverted into arson and looting, in which all classes eventually joined, allowing an easy restoration of order in the capital. But what could, at a stretch, be regarded as a confused urban variant of the 'defensive feud' inexorably reignited this now entrenched pattern across the countryside, as Liberal notables, fearing Conservative revenge for the upheaval—which duly materialized in a savage wave of local assassinations and persecutions—mobilized their peasant followings to resist, hoping for an

outcome different from the War of a Thousand Days. Blood flowed as it had fifty years earlier, but this time for much longer.¹⁹

All together more than 200,000 people, mostly illiterate peasants, had been killed by the time *La Violencia* was officially over. Strands of social conflict were never absent from it, as tenants, sharecroppers and squatters on the coffee frontiers were drawn into successive waves of fighting on both sides. But *La Violencia* as a whole was a huge historical regression, in which archaic partisan hostilities swamped not only the legacy of Gaitán's short-lived populism, but also the chance of any independent class politics beyond it. The havoc it wreaked was all the more futile, in that by 1948 there was little substantive disagreement left between the Liberals, who had long dropped notions of social reform, and the Conservatives, who were not free marketeers. The two elites were united in a common devotion to Cold War capitalism and anti-communism that rendered even Gómez's brand of clerical fervour increasingly irrelevant. Meanwhile, as the cities filled with displaced families fleeing the slaughter in the backlands, the mid-1940s onwards saw a decade of unprecedented urban prosperity. Eerily, agricultural production jumped 77 per cent in 1948 and 113 per cent in 1949. Provincial merchants, shopkeepers, estate managers and political brokers grew rich on expropriated land, coffee and livestock.²⁰

Gómez himself, who became President in 1950 in an election boycotted by the Liberals, withdrew due to poor health soon afterwards; when he

¹⁹ The map of *La Violencia* coincides with that of the coffee frontiers, settled in the late nineteenth century, and the zones of colonization in the early twentieth. Focused from 1945 to 1949 in Santander, Boyacá, Caldas, Valle del Cauca, from 1949 to 1953 the violence was concentrated in frontier regions: the eastern plains, the Magdalena Medio, Muzo in Boyacá, Urrao in Antioquia; from 1954–58, with the spread of Conservative gunmen (*los pájaros*) under the dictatorship, it became most intense in the Quindío; from the beginning of the National Front and government persecution of banditry in Quindío and Tolima, and the independent republics in Tolima and Cundinamarca, 1959–64. Similarly, a cartographic look at violence in the countryside since the 1980s would overlap the frontier territories where export commodities—coca, oil, emeralds, bananas, hardwoods, gold, coal, palm oil—are produced. See Mary Roldán, *Blood and Fire: La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946–53*, Durham, NC 2002, which provides the best overview of the period.

²⁰ Carlos Miguel Ortiz Sarmiento, 'The "Business of the Violence": The Quindío in the 1950s and 1960s', in Bergquist et al., *Violence in Colombia: Historical Perspective*, pp. 125–54; see also, Jesús Antonio Bejarano, 'Democracia, conflicto y eficiencia económica', in Bejarano, ed., *Construir la paz*, Bogotá 1990, pp. 143–71.

attempted to resume his duties in 1953, he was ousted by Colombia's only military coup of modern times. General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, head of the Army, seized power with the support of Gómez's factional opponents within the Conservative Party, with which he had close family and personal links. Once in power, he tried to mould organized labour into a clientelist bloc loyal only to him, and has been painted as a Perón-like figure. But he had participated in the Conservative bloodletting as a commander—even the us embassy had complained that he 'saw a red behind every coffee bush'—and as President proceeded to amass a fortune in crooked cattle-ranching and real-estate deals.²¹ Under him, *La Violencia* entered a new phase.

Highland struggles

When disorganized civil war had broken out after Gaitán's death, the PSD—already outlawed by Ospina—focused on clandestine work in the countryside, advocating armed self-defence. In 1949 its first groups formed along the railway line in Santander, in the oil enclaves in Ariari and, most importantly, given the subsequent course of events, in Tolima and Cundinamarca, where the PSD's and UNIR's peasant leagues had been strong in the 1930s. At the end of the year, Liberal chieftains had approached the party for help in setting up guerrillas in its strongholds. By 1950, with official anti-communism operating at a genocidal pitch, left-liberal Gaitanistas formed a guerrilla front with PSD fighters in southern Tolima. The force was led by the Loayza brothers, one of whose relatives, Pedro Antonio Marín, aka Manuel Marulanda or Tiro Fijo (Sure Shot), leads the FARC today.²² But by the time Rojas Pinilla launched his own counter-insurgency campaign, led by veterans of the battalion that Gómez had sent to fight alongside the us in the Korean War, the Liberal-Communist alliance in southern Tolima had fractured. After five years of fighting, the most formidable Liberal guerrilla force on the eastern plains, some 20,000-strong, turned over its arms in the first of many failed amnesties.²³ Under intensified military pressure, some of the Communist militias demobilized as well, while the

²¹ See Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, pp. 370, 366.

²² Medófilo Medina, 'La resistencia campesina en el sur de Tolima', in Gonzalo Sánchez and Ricardo Peñaranda, eds, *Pasado y Presente de la Violencia en Colombia*, Bogotá 1986, pp. 233–65.

²³ Gonzalo Sánchez, 'Raíces de la amnistía en Colombia o las etapas de la guerra en Colombia', in *Ensayos*, pp. 215–75; Alfredo Molano, *Amnistía y Violencia*, Bogotá 1978.

remainder were driven out of their strongholds. In southern Tolima, a micro-war unfolded between the two groups as the Liberals, now properly reintegrated into the central Party apparatus, succeeded in expelling the Communists from much of the region.

To stamp out one of their last redoubts, Rojas Pinilla unleashed the 'War of Villarica' in 1955, targeting a highland municipality of northern Tolima that was home to peasant unions and the Communists' Democratic Front for National Liberation with a blitz of 5,000 troops, while us-donated F-47s and B-26 bombers dropped napalm, as in Korea. Government forces occupied the area and an estimated 100,000 peasants were displaced. Half the Communist guerrillas fled to Sumapaz, across the border in Cundinamarca, which remains under FARC control today. Another column, with 100 armed men for 200 families, marched over the central highlands into the southeastern lowlands to found the settlements of El Guayabero in western Meta and El Pato in northwestern Caquetá, also currently run by the FARC. Here men who had been trade-union or peasant leaders in the mountains became military commanders in the colonies of the new frontier.²⁴

Yet despite—and in part because of—much heavier and more centralized repression, rural violence was far from extinguished; it began to take new forms, with paid Conservative gunmen, the *pájaros*, murdering Liberal families in the countryside, and secret police thugs committing brutalities in the towns. When Rojas made clear his intention of staying in power indefinitely, cracking down on opponents and simulating populist gestures for urban consumption, the oligarchy, which had always prized civilian rule, closed ranks against him. By early 1957, not only both political parties but the industrialists and the Church wanted him out; a business-organized shut-down toppled him. Two months later

²⁴ On all this see, Eduardo Pizarro Leongómez, *Las FARC: De la autodefensa a la combinación de todas las formas de lucha*, Bogotá 1991; Alfredo Molano, *Selva Adentro*, Bogotá 1987, pp. 36–48; and *Trochas y Fusiles*, Bogotá 1994, pp. 91–103; for Sumapaz, see José Jairo González Arias and Elsy Marulanda, *Historias de frontera: Colonización y guerras en el Sumapaz*, Bogotá 1990. Although somewhere between 30 and 40 per cent of current FARC combatants and officers are women, in the 1940s and 50s men dominated both the peasant leagues and the communist militias, and they still control the Estado Mayor and the higher levels of leadership. For the pre-history, see Michael Jiménez, 'Gender, Class, and the Roots of Peasant Resistance in Central Colombia, 1900–1930', in Forrest Colburn, ed., *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New York 1990, pp. 121–50.

Laureano Gómez, who had spent his exile in Franco's Spain, and Alberto Lleras Camargo, who had flown there to negotiate with him, signed the Pact of Sitges, formally committing Conservatives and Liberals to create a National Front that would share power equally between the two parties, with alternating occupation of the Presidency and parity of representation at all levels of government. Supported by business leaders, the Church and party elites, the pact was scheduled to last until 1974; in practice it endured, with minor modifications, until 1986. The Church, abandoning its exclusive affiliation with the Conservative Party, now sought to unify the two formations.²⁵

Political lockout

The National Front was to be the defining moment of modern Colombian history. The traditional two-party system had stunted and twisted the expression of modern political oppositions, but could not altogether repress them. In the 1930s and 40s, Liberalism had developed an incipient left-populist dynamic, and Conservatism a flamboyant defence of private property and the altar. In their own way, each of these had got out of elite control, unleashing a sectarian conflict worse than the War of a Thousand Days, which came to threaten the dyarchy itself. The National Front restored the two-party system, but now drained of any real tension between its components. In Cold War conditions, the New Deal and the *Cruzada Nacionalista* had become equally anachronistic reference points: anti-communism was now a sufficient unifying cement for both. The result was to shut the political expression of any radical demands or frustrations out of the system, which became a pure machinery of common elite interests, apportioning all government offices and posts to Liberals and Conservatives in advance.

The National Front thus entrenched an exclusionary democracy that persists to this day, in which scarcely half the population even votes; Colombia has the lowest electoral participation rates of the continent. Radical popular movements were criminalized by state-of-siege legislation that equated protest with subversion. Quasi-official opposition forces such as the Revolutionary Liberal Movement (MLR), led by Alfonso

²⁵ In Colombia alone, liberation theology was opposed by the Church hierarchy *en bloque* (no dissident voices there), and those who chose to pursue its path ended up, by and large, dead, in exile, or, like the Spaniards Manuel Pérez, Domingo Laín and José Antonio Jiménez, swelling the meagre ranks of the ELN.

López Michelsen, and the Alianza Nacional Popular (ANAPO), led by Rojas Pinilla after his return from exile, had to run candidates on Liberal or Conservative slates. Banned from elections, the Communists—now known as the PCC rather than the PSD—fell into line behind the Liberal Party, which came to constitute the ‘spinal column’ of National Front politics. If Colombia was spared the experience of the military dictatorships that led assaults on labour and peasant radicalism elsewhere in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, it was because the job had already been done. Though labour militancy increased in the mid-1960s in response to a rapidly deteriorating economic situation as coffee prices fell, the movement as a whole remained fragmented and weak. Thus, with the closure of political space in the civilian arena, blocking the re-emergence of any vibrant urban populism centred on the trade unions, only one avenue for social protest was left. In the 1960s and 1970s the inevitable vehicle of choice for opposition forces became armed insurgency.

This option, of course, was rooted in the long pre-history of the peasant struggles and land occupations along the coffee frontier, and their engulfing by the larger turbulence of *La Violencia*, which lingered, much of it as random killings and banditry, through the early years of the National Front. But there were also still unsubdued enclaves of Communist resistance. In 1961 Gómez's son Álvaro coined the term ‘independent republics’ to refer to sixteen areas over which the central government did not exercise territorial sovereignty. Under the Liberal presidency of Lleras Camargo—responsible for crushing the 1945 river-workers’ strike, and picked by Laureano Gómez as National Front candidate in 1958—these ‘red zones’ were surrounded by a military cordon that effectively isolated them from the outside world. But once the Cuban Revolution had put Washington into high gear, there was a new urgency to eradicate them.

Birth of the FARC

In May 1964 the Colombian Armed Forces launched ‘Operation Sovereignty’ to retake the municipality of Marquetalia, a small Communist stronghold in the extreme south of Tolima, on the border of Cauca and Huila. Huey helicopters, 1-33 combat planes, seven army battalions, two specialized counterinsurgent companies and intelligence groups (GIL) were thrown in to wipe out the community and its now legendary leader Tiro Fijo. But here and in other coordinated military

attacks, territory was captured, but not the enemy. Families, forced to flee once more, found their way either to the Cauca or into the tropical lowlands of Caquetá and Meta; unable to settle in villages, the fighters formed a mobile guerrilla force. National Front counterinsurgency operations had only succeeded in unleashing a wave of armed migrations from the central highlands to the southeastern jungle. With the opening salvos of 'Operation Sovereignty', *comandantes* from Marquetalia, Rio Chiquito and El Pato came together in El Bloque Sur to issue a new agrarian programme.²⁶ This was the birth of the FARC.

Two other guerrilla forces emerged in the same years. The ELN is usually characterized as a middle-class, university-based group that followed Che's theory of the *foco* to the letter. In fact it was no less rooted in the history of popular liberalism, communism and peasant-proletarian struggle than the FARC. The patriarch of the Vázquez clan had participated in the Gaitanista takeover of the country's oil port, Barrancabermeja, in 1948, and led Liberal militias during *La Violencia*; other early cadres were also Liberal veterans. Vázquez's sons went to Cuba in 1962 to set up a *foco* and ended up defending the revolution against us invasion at Escambray. On their return they set up the first ELN *foco* in San Vicente de Chucurí, Santander. They could count on the support of key layers from the oil workers' union, USO, following the strike against the state petroleum company ECOPETROL in 1963, as well as that of the elderly peasant squatters who had led the 'Bolshevik uprising' in Libano in 1929. In 1964 the ELN accepted their most famous recruit, the priest and sociologist Camilo Torres Restrepo, whose death in combat in early 1966 provided liberation theology with its first martyr.²⁷

The Maoist People's Liberation Army (EPL) guerrilla grouping, formed in 1967, grew out of the same background of agrarian struggle. One of its founders, Pedro Vázquez Rendón, had been the PSD's political

²⁶ Following the lead of its squatting and smallholding constituency, the FARC has always called, in practice if not in theory, for the radical reform of capitalism and the state, never for their overthrow. The FARC are of the market, not outside or against it, and in this respect their distance from Sendero Luminoso, the only other Latin American guerrilla group to rely so heavily on terror, could not be greater.

²⁷ Torres, who studied with Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez at the Louvain in Belgium, inspired Gutiérrez's landmark text of 1967, *Liberation Theology*, as discussed in Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People*, New York 1977, pp. 29–31. For the ELN, see Fabiola Calvo Ocampo, *Manuel Pérez: un cura español en la guerrilla colombiana*, Madrid 1998, and Carlos Medina Gallego, *ELN: una historia en dos voces contadas*, Bogotá 1996.

commissar in southern Tolima during *La Violencia*—it was he who had suggested that Pedro Antonio Marín call himself Manuel Marulanda, in honour of one of the leaders of the PSR. The PC-ML (Communist Party-Marxist-Leninist) itself had emerged from the youth wing of the PCC in 1965, following the Sino-Soviet split. With the help of former Liberal guerrilla commander and MRL militant, Julio Guerra, the EPL set up a *foco* in a peripheral region of Antioquia with the goal of waging prolonged popular war.²⁸

Urban discontents

Nevertheless, the ideological courage and relative popular legitimacy of the guerrilla groups of this period should not lead us to exaggerate their size. By the mid-1970s, the EPL was practically non-existent; the ELN was nearly eliminated in Anorí in 1973, and the FARC were still confined mainly to the lowland regions southeast of Bogotá that they had helped colonize. In the cities, meanwhile, though secondary education expanded somewhat, unemployment rose sharply throughout the 1960s. Protectionist industrial policies failed to generate jobs and the working and lower-middle class saw hopes of social mobility dashed.

In 1969 ANAPO won majorities in municipal councils and departmental assemblies. In 1970 Rojas Pinilla, running as a Conservative but on an anti-National Front platform, mobilized an anti-oligarchic discourse reminiscent of Gaitán's—supplemented by a reactionary defence of a Catholic tradition that was gradually losing ground to mass-media influence—to win an estimated 39 per cent of the vote, mainly from the lower-middle and working class. The National Front resorted to thinly disguised last-minute fraud to deny him victory and impose its candidate, the Conservative Misael Pastrana. Once in office, he sponsored public works and urban remodelling in an attempt to generate employment and the appearance of reform.

López Michelsen (1974–78), the corrupt son of López Pumarejo, and a former rebel against his Party, was technically the last president to serve under the National Front. He courted the urban constituency that had supported Rojas Pinilla, speaking of two Colombias: the first, connected

²⁸ For this group, see Álvaro Villarraga and Nelson Plazas, *Para reconstruir los sueños: una historia del EPL*, Bogotá 1994; and Fabiola Calvo Ocampo, *EPL: una historia armada*, Madrid 1987.

to coffee and manufacturing, included Antioquia, the western Andean departments and the Caribbean port of Barranquilla; it received the bulk of government investment in infrastructure and government services. The other Colombia, said to cover 70 per cent of national territory, was where blacks, Indians and frontier settlers lived—the southern and eastern plains and lowlands and the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. These regions received little investment and had virtually no state presence, electricity, public services or even minimal infrastructure. But though coffee prices temporarily reached new heights in the mid-1970s, inflating state budgets, the near-collapse of traditional industries coupled with elite opposition ensured that López Michelsen's promises of reform remained a fantasy.

Simmering urban discontent took dramatic form in 1974 when a new group, M-19—named after the day, 19 April, when the election had been stolen from Rojas Pinilla—announced its appearance by stealing Bolívar's sword from the historical museum in central Bogotá. Composed of middle-class Anapistas as well as young FARC and PCC dissidents, M-19 had, from the outset, a keen sense of how best to exploit the communications media to cultivate the same aura of romantic bravado that had surrounded the urban guerrillas of the Southern Cone, some of whose veterans swelled the *cmc* ranks. An explicitly national-popular movement with electoral ambitions, M-19's stated goal was not the overthrow of capitalism or the Colombian state but the opening up of the existing political system. It generated widespread if diffuse support among the fragmented working and middle-class layers that had voted for Rojas Pinilla and López Michelsen.

The mid-70s saw a proliferation of civic protests over public services led by the working class of the urban peripheries, mobilizing neighbourhood associations and cooperatives. In 1977, the three major trade-union confederations staged a *paro cívico*, or civic strike, which was punished with brutal state repression. Thereafter, high unemployment, lower wages, decreased social security and the rise of the 'informal sector'—in which more than half the Colombian proletariat would be toiling by 1985—would contribute to the weakening of an already divided labour movement.²⁹ The crushing of the *paro cívico* set the stage for a widespread crackdown under the next Liberal president, César Turbay Ayala

²⁹ Pierre Gilhodes, 'Movimientos sociales en los años ochenta y noventa', in Álvaro Tirado Mejía, ed., *La Nueva Historia de Colombia*, vol. VIII, Bogotá 1995, pp. 171–90.

(1978–82). Political activists of all stripes as well as hundreds, if not thousands, of innocent people were targeted as ‘subversives’ by the army, the police, the intelligence services and a growing number of paramilitary organizations. Many were tortured, imprisoned or ‘disappeared’. Death squads like AAA (Anti-Communist Alliance) began to murder indiscriminately, on the Argentine model. Political violence grew much more intense than it had been during the previous decade.

The overall climate in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the urban trade-union and civic movements smashed, was thus a propitious one for guerrilla growth. There was as yet no obfuscatory discourse of ‘armed actors of the Left and Right’ (as would be pioneered by Northern analysts of El Salvador in the 1980s). Politically, the guerrillas enjoyed some measure of prestige in the cities right up to the mid-1980s, where many middle-class dissidents accepted the legitimacy of their struggle—and even more so in the countryside, where such people were witness to, as well as victims of, human-rights violations. Besides, as middle-class Jacobinism or popular liberalism, this was nothing new. The brutal reaction of the Turbay administration, coupled with hopes unleashed by the Nicaraguan revolution, gave the guerrillas a new lease of life. They argued that Colombia under Turbay was no different from the military juntas of the Southern Cone, while the Sandinistas had shown that armed struggle was the only way to overthrow dictatorship.

Heat in the export enclaves

This latest phase of guerrilla growth, however, took place within a rapidly changing political-economic environment. A process of restructuring had begun within the oligarchy during the long stagnation of the 1960s and 1970s. Important fractions of capital had shifted their interests away from production toward speculation and the capture of rents. New enclaves, dominated by foreign capital and the production of a single commodity for export, multiplied—the petroleum regions of Arauca and Santander, the coal sector of the Guajira, bananas in Urabá. The marijuana business, initially organized by Peace Corps veterans and quickly taken over by Colombian smugglers, flowered in the Cauca, César, Guajira and Magdalena departments.³⁰ Construction and banking soared. The Conservative base continued to shrink.

³⁰ Darío Betancourt and Martha Luz García, *Contrabandistas, marimberos y mafiosos: Historia social de la mafia colombiana (1965–1992)*, Bogotá 1994, p. 47.

It was within this new context that the ELN, reborn from the ashes of its near-annihilation at Anorí, began from the late 1970s to target the export enclaves, surfacing in the petroleum regions of Arauca and Santander and, later, in the El Cerrrejón coal-mining zone, with a new vision of revolution modelled on Central America rather than Cuba. Building on its liberation-theology tradition, it strengthened ties to the popular movements and began working closely with the more militant Marxist sectors of the oil workers' union, USO, just as petroleum overtook coffee as Colombia's leading legitimate export. By the mid-1980s the ELN would be extorting petroleum rents from German multinationals contracted to construct the Caño-Limón pipeline in Arauca (with the covert aid of the Kohl government).

Meanwhile, M-19 initiated its first urban operations in 1978; the following year its militants stole 4,000 machine guns from the armoury in Bogotá and, in 1980, occupied the Dominican Embassy with the US envoy inside—operations that were typically flash and risky, and did not require a broad social base or mobilization.²¹ For its part, the EPL dropped Maoism—which had led to numerous internal splits—in 1980, and made modest headway in the cattle country of Córdoba and the banana zone of Urabá, which it would dispute with the FARC in the 1980s and 1990s. The mostly Afro-Colombian workers there had organized a union but, like the indigenous movement in the Cauca, CRIC, the *bananeros* faced high levels of state and paramilitary violence; both would later confront FARC violence as well.²²

For the FARC, too, abandoned their defensive strategy—and, eventually, their longstanding traditions of agrarian struggle—to project themselves throughout the national territory in face of this armed competition

²¹ On M-19, see Darío Villamizar, *Aquel 19 será*, Bogotá 1995; Laura Restrepo, *Historia de un entusiasmo*, Bogotá 1999; and for its fate, Ricardo Peñaranda and Javier Guerrero, *De las armas a la política*, Bogotá 1999.

²² Fernando Botero Herrera, *Urabá: Colonización, violencia, y crisis del Estado*, Medellín 1990; Clara Inés García, *Urabá: Región, actores y conflicto, 1960–1990*, Bogotá 1996; William Ramírez Tobón, *Urabá: Los inciertos confines de una crisis*, Bogotá 1997. In the Cauca in the mid-1980s, FARC and state/paramilitary violence led to the formation of an indigenous guerrilla group, Quintín Lame, which laid down its arms in 1991. After banana workers staged a 20,000-strong solidarity strike in 1992, the FARC massacred scores of them in 1993, claiming that the formerly EPL-affiliated workers had become paramilitaries following 'peace' in 1991. The FARC would commit several more massacres of banana workers in the mid-1990s.

from the Left. By the early 1980s they had expanded from their bases in Caquetá, Meta and Putumayo into the Urabá banana enclave in the northeast, the Middle Magdalena and the southeastern plains—Guaviare, Vichada and Vaupés. This was the jump-off point from which, feeding on taxes levied from the country's thriving new cocaine industry, they would gradually morph into a military enterprise dedicated principally to territorial expansion.

Narcotics enter the system

Fumigation of marijuana in the Cauca and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the extradition of leading traffickers to the us began, under Turbay's presidency, at the very moment that cocaine replaced marijuana as Colombia's most profitable export. In many respects, Turbay's administration marks the start of the current historical cycle. The Liberal Party was given a new lease of life with the drug trade. Modernizing technocrats in Bogotá saw their limited power over the departments diminish as new political brokers—more corrupt, cynical and willing to work with the cocaine mafia than were the traditional caciques—came to dominate regional and local political landscapes. Provincial clientelism was revamped and the military and police assumed more prominent roles as the upholders of 'public order'. It was under the Turbay administration, too, that Álvaro Uribe Vélez began his political career, granting pilot licences to drug traffickers as head of *Aerocivil*. Pablo Escobar and other leading traffickers began to make inroads into national politics at the same time, mainly through the Liberal Party. Escobar himself became a Liberal deputy in Congress, aligned with Alberto Santofimio, one of the most corrupt of the old-style caciques.³³

The question of drug money in politics was not even raised until the 1982 elections. Escobar and the other traffickers moved freely: during

³³ Escobar and associates such as his cousin, Gustavo 'Osito' Gaviria, or el Negro Galeano, came from humble neighbourhoods in Envigado and had gained valuable experience in the Urabá tobacco wars of the early 1970s. The Medellín elite initially barred them from buying into industry, and refused them membership of their exclusive clubs. The Cali *capos* who came from middle-class and upper middle-class backgrounds were considerably more successful at discreetly integrating themselves into the regional oligarchy, though Chepe Santacruz had to build his own club after being blackballed by the Club Colombia. When the two cartels were dismantled in the mid-1990s, hundreds of smaller, more decentralized syndicates proliferated and their influence in politics, especially the Liberal Party, continues unchecked.

Uribe's four-month tenure as mayor of Medellín in 1982, the city was known as 'the sanctuary'. Cocaine processing and transport—centred, as the coffee industry had been, on Medellín—linked the first Colombia of the central and western highlands to the second Colombia of the eastern lowlands and Pacific and Atlantic coasts, through new cities (Florencia, Villavicencio, Leticia) as well as roads, airports and motorboats. For frontier settlers in Caquetá, Putumayo, Guaviare, Vichada, Guainía, Vaupés, Sucre, Córdoba, the Chocó, Bolívar, the Santanderes—and, to a lesser extent, in Antioquia, Huila, Tolima, Cauca and Meta—coca became the only crop profitable enough to overcome the high transport costs that resulted from the lack of infrastructure.³⁴ Medellín began to recover some of its fading industrial glory, becoming the major hub for the only industry that Colombians owned and controlled; a process facilitated by Antioqueño migration to Jackson Heights, Queens, which provided Escobar, the Ochoas, the Galeanos, Fidel Castaño, Kiko Moncada and others with ready-made distribution networks.

Secrets of survival

Without the rise of the coca economy from the late 1970s, the FARC would have had neither a geographically extensive network of semi-dependent clients on the open coca frontiers, nor a multi-billion dollar war chest with which to expand their operations; and the Colombian Army would be faced with the task of re-taking a southeastern region, albeit a large one, rather than over 40 per cent of a national territory divided by three *cordilleras* and countless rivers.

Nevertheless, in attempting to answer the question why, decade after decade, the state has failed to break the back of armed resistance, other crucial factors come into play. Until the 1990s, genuine popular sympathy in the 'liberated zones' gave the guerrillas important support. The FARC was the armed force of a peasant colonizers' movement, and

³⁴ For the colonization of Guaviare and Vaupés, see Molano, *Selva Adentro*; and of Vichada and Guainía, also by Molano, *Aguas Arriba*, Bogotá 1990. The history of the coca frontier is explored in William Ramírez Tobón, 'La guerrilla rural en Colombia: ¿Una vía hacia la colonización armada?', *Estudios Rurales Latinoamericanos*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1981), pp. 199–209; Fernando Cubides et al., *Colonización, coca, y guerrilla* Bogotá 1989; Alfredo Molano, 'Algunas consideraciones sobre colonización y violencia', in Catherine LeGrand et al., eds, *El agro y la cuestión social*, Bogotá 1994, pp. 27–41; and for a summary of the debate, LeGrand, 'Colonización y violencia en Colombia: Perspectivas y debate', in *El agro*.

its ties to communities in the southeastern regions were solid. These were sparsely populated territories that the Colombian government had never administered—no infrastructure or public services; not even party clientelism—but which had undergone successive booms in quinine and rubber. After the 1950s, they filled up with people fleeing partisan violence in the highlands. From the 1960s until the 80s, the FARC upheld the banner of radical agrarianism: the only force—apart from the PCC, to which they were organically linked—to call on the government to realize promises of land reform, infrastructural development, credit cooperatives and technical assistance; indeed, the only one—at least in select frontier regions—to take up those tasks that the state had failed or refused to do. The FARC were the local and regional administration in many parts of the southeast; by any standard of living memory they were, even at their worst, better than the national government or the traffickers.

Indeed, in some areas they have offered the only measure of protection available to coca growers against the arbitrary brutality of the traffickers. Debt-driven mechanisms of labour control, their 'contracts' enforced through assassination—whether these were inherited from the rubber boom in the southeast or transplanted from the highland emerald mines of Boyacá—cast the FARC as much-needed arbiters of the labour market in frontier areas like Meta and Guaviare. Until quite recently, FARC violence unfolded according to predictable, if ruthless, rules that could guarantee 'order' and 'stability' on the frontier, whereas narco-terror led to 'chaos' and 'unpredictability', particularly of coca-paste prices. The FARC, in other words, have enabled the smooth functioning of the coca-paste market: without them the narcos might have destroyed each other with interminable mini-wars in the jungle. As well as maintaining a reservoir of support in the frontier regions, the imposition of law and order has allowed the FARC to siphon off fabulous amounts of wealth for their war-machine by levying a tax known as *el gramaje*: though the figures are by nature impossible to confirm, one expert has put the FARC's 1999 earnings at \$900 million.³⁵ If, lacking extensive transport and

³⁵ See Bruce Bagley, 'Drug Trafficking, Political Violence, and US Policy in Colombia in the 1990s', available at www.mamacoca.org. While levying taxes on drug production (*el gramaje*) is a legitimate revolutionary tactic, in Colombia it forms part of a pattern of extortion established during *La Violencia*, in which kidnapping, *la vacuna* ('the vaccination') and *el boleteo* (the charging of war taxes via threatening letters) were employed as tactics to raise money, especially in Quindío and Risaralda, coffee regions that had been home to bandit gangs, as well as the Vázquez family (ELN) and Tiro Fijo (FARC).

distribution networks, the FARC are in no position to compete with the AUC in international markets, they can at least offer food, clothing, high-tech weapons, a cell phone and a monthly salary to impoverished rural youths who do not want to be government soldiers or paramilitaries.

Drug lords and death squads

The paramilitaries, with their ties to the repressive organs of the state, the Catholic Church and the two parties, have been able to profit from the cocaine business on a much grander scale than the FARC: in an interview in October 2000, Carlos Castaño estimated (conservatively) that 70 per cent of AUC monies came from the drug trade. They are involved not only in coca-paste taxation and protection rackets but also in transport and distribution.³⁶ They owe this lucrative role to their origin as death squads of the drug cartels. In the early 1980s, traffickers like Escobar, the Ochoas, Carlos Lehder and Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, enraged by guerrilla incursions on their activities, organized MAS, or 'Death to Kidnappers', to slaughter insurgents. This was the armed precursor of today's Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia—the AUC. Rodríguez, the most virulently anti-communist of the traffickers, had worked as a lieutenant under Gilberto Molina in the Boyacá emerald mines, where each *capo* had a rudimentary military apparatus to enforce control over labour and rivals; he served as a bridge between narco-paramilitarism in the Middle Magdalena and the southeastern lowlands; between the first Colombia and the second.³⁷

Carlos Castaño, leader of the AUC, describes a more internationalist formation in his 2001 autobiography, *My Confession*. As an eighteen-year-old former army scout serving in the ranks of MAS, he was sent

³⁶ Jeremy Bigwood, 'Doing the US's Dirty Work: The Colombian Paramilitaries and Israel', citing a 1998 DEA Report: www.narconews.com.

³⁷ Another bridge was built by Pedro Juan Moreno Villa, who, as head of the cattle-men's association in Antioquia in 1983, defended MAS in a public debate with Lara Bonilla in Puerto Berrío, a decade and a half before he facilitated the re-conquest of Urabá. On Rodríguez Gacha, see Jorge Enrique Velásquez, 'El Navegante', *Cómo me infiltré y engañé al Cartel*, Bogotá 1992. Escobar, by contrast, considered himself a man of the Left, a foe of imperialism and the oligarchy, had ties to M-19 in the early 1980s and to the ELN in early 1990s; this created friction with business associates such as Fidel Castaño, who eventually helped killed him: Alonso Salazar, *La parábola de Pablo: Auge y caída de un gran capo de narcotráfico*, Bogotá 2002, pp. 85–7, 103, 268.

to train in Israel in 1983. Detailing how he ordered and participated in massacres of civilians, Castaño insists, 'I copied the concept of paramilitary forces from the Israelis'.³⁸ The lessons learnt in the West Bank and Gaza were applied in the Magdalena Medio region, which MAS had begun to 'fumigate' of suspected communists and guerrilla sympathizers in the early 1980s; Castaño was at work there under the direction of his brother, Fidel—who would soon retire to devote himself more fully to paramilitarism—and Escobar.

As the violence initiated by Turbay began to spiral out of control, Conservative President Belisario Betancur (1982–86) made the first attempt to negotiate a ceasefire. Once a follower of Laureano Gómez, but by temperament in many ways a loner in the establishment, Betancur was moved by the plight of the population, and wished to improve it. In 1982, as a first step, he declared an amnesty and freed several hundred guerrillas and political activists imprisoned under Turbay; named social inequality as the culprit of the maladies spawned by the guerrillas; and insisted on executive, rather than legislative, supervision of ceasefire negotiations—although any proposed reforms would have had to go through Congress. Here, it seemed, was a window through which it was possible to glimpse a de-militarization of socio-political life and a serious discussion of problems such as violent dispossession in the countryside and unemployment in the cities. For their part the FARC, in a covert attack on the ELN, which had not joined the ceasefire, denounced 'kidnapping and all forms of terrorism that threaten human dignity and liberty'.³⁹

Contradictions of peace

But Betancur never had the support of his generals or strong backing from any fraction of the ruling class, and he was dependent on Congress for any structural change. He lacked either the power or the will to

³⁸ Quoted in Bigwood, 'Doing the us's Dirty Work'. Though the feud between narco-traffickers and the guerrillas is usually chalked up to M-19's kidnapping of a leading trafficker's relative, Marta Nieves Ochoa, in 1980, which led to the formation of MAS, disputed profits from the cocaine business lay at the root of the dispute. Apparently, the FARC had stolen merchandise from Rodríguez Gacha at one of his largest cocaine laboratories, Tranquilandia, in Meta. See Salazar, *La parábola*, p. III.

³⁹ Alfredo Molano, 'Fórmulas', *El Espectador*, 15 September 2002. The most thorough examination of the peace process is Mark Chernick, 'Insurgency and Negotiations: Defining the Boundaries of the Political Regime in Colombia', Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1991.

insist on real social reform. The three insurgencies that entered into negotiations with him—FARC, EPL and M-19—could see this, and used the contradictions to strengthen their own position, calling attention to rising army and paramilitary abuses and engaging in spectacular military operations. By the time agreement had been reached, in late 1984, the FARC had doubled its number of fronts, from fourteen to twenty-eight. On their side, narco-paramilitaries—aided by military and police officials, as well as Liberal and Conservative Party bosses in the municipalities—geared up for future battles; as did one wing of the internally divided FARC. The spectacular rise of the cocaine industry did not increase the disposition to compromise.⁴⁰ Within the government, moreover, the figure in charge of managing contacts with M-19, EPL and FARC, Jaime Castro Castro, was the political godfather of Liberal Party boss Pablo Emilio Guarín Vera, who was himself closely tied to narco-violence, especially in Puerto Boyacá, where one of the paramilitary training camps, staffed by British and Israeli mercenaries on their way to Central America, was named after him.

In 1985 M-19, hoping that a general strike in June would turn into urban insurrection, and complaining of army violations of the cease-fire, pulled out of the truce themselves. In November their commandos staged a spectacular seizure of the Palace of Justice in the centre of Bogotá, capturing the Supreme Court within it, and requested negotiations. The Army responded by blasting the building in a tank assault that ended with the slaughter of all inside. Betancur was scarcely even consulted: the high command made it clear that if he demurred he would be ousted. The massacre marked the beginning of the end of M-19 as a political-military force.

Avoiding this kind of adventure in favour of a strategy of 'combining all forms of struggle', the FARC and PCC formed the Patriotic Union (UP), as a civilian front designed to help consolidate a power base within the formal political system prior to laying down arms. In 1986, following six years of rising strike activity, a progressive trade union federation, the CUT, was born—another sign of intensified popular protest. Though in regions of frontier colonization like Urabá and the Chocó, peasant communities with a strong Afro-Colombian presence made the

⁴⁰ Sales of Colombian cocaine, marijuana, and heroin generated an estimated \$4.6 billion in revenues in 1999, of which Colombia's share was \$3.5 billion; a sum nearly equivalent to the \$3.9 billion from petroleum, Colombia's chief export: see Bagley, 'Drug Trafficking'.

UP their vehicle for advancing radical democracy, the strategy carried high risks for the FARC and the PCC supporters.⁴¹ Given the hardening of the narco-paramilitary right as a historic bloc in opposition to the peace negotiations, an electoral politics so intimately tied to the nation's largest guerrilla insurgency was all too likely to result in widespread extra-judicial execution of left politicians and militants, especially at local levels. Furthermore, a faction within the FARC understood this and argued for increased militarization.⁴² In tragic confirmation of their position, by 1987 three hundred UP militants, including presidential candidate Jaime Pardo Leal, had been assassinated by the Right, as well as many key members of the CUT leadership. More than three thousand UP activists would be murdered by 1991.

As the ultra-rightwing onslaught gathered momentum in the late 1980s, students, professors and professionals like Dr Hector Abad Gómez were assassinated, as were prostitutes, homosexuals, transvestites, thieves, petty drug dealers and users, in 'social cleansing' operations that became generalized in Medellín, Cali, Pereira, Bogotá and Barranquilla. Tragically, the popular militias that sprang up in the peripheral neighbourhoods of Colombia's major cities after 1985, dedicated to fighting the corrosive effects of the drug trade on community life, also became involved. Nevertheless, in 1987 and 1988, under the guns of the armed forces and their paramilitary allies, social movements staged massive marches in the cities and the countryside, and moved closer to the guerrilla insurgencies, particularly the FARC and the ELN. The latter had grown rapidly during the ceasefire period, and in 1987 founded the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination with the FARC. Promises of insurgent unity proved illusory, however, as the atmosphere of sectarian competition that had characterized the Left since the 1930s lingered.⁴³

⁴¹ Here I disagree with Molano, who argues that it was a 'wise' strategy. Though it is not easy to spell out a viable alternative, the FARC might at least have applied the tight security measures the situation demanded, protecting their people and allies in the UP from needless risk. They might also have considered neighbourhood and workplace organizing in the cities, rather than setting up militias among the displaced on the urban outskirts.

⁴² This faction is currently dominant within the FARC's Estado Mayor, and is best represented by Jorge Briceño, aka 'el Mono Jojoy,' the FARC's military commander.

⁴³ Like nearly everything in Colombia, relations between the FARC and the ELN vary according to region. In some areas, such as southern Bolívar, the FARC and the ELN carry out joint attacks on paramilitary bases, while in parts of Antioquia, the FARC has practically declared war on the ELN.

Meanwhile, as the ceasefire with the guerrillas was being concluded in late 1984, Escobar had Betancur's Minister of Justice Lara Bonilla assassinated. Lara Bonilla's crime had been to resist the influence of the cocaine mafia in Liberal Party politics and to expose the connexions between military officials, cattle ranchers and narcotraffickers in the formation of MAS.⁴⁴ In the wake of the peace process, Escobar and the Medellín cartel, aligned with Liberal Party bosses in the provinces and factions of the military and police, increasingly determined the parameters of Colombian politics. Narco-investment in land, initially concentrated in the Magdalena Medio, became widespread. Ties between the cocaine merchants, who had also invested heavily in finance and construction, and the newly formed 'self-defence' forces became tighter and more systematic.

Under pressure from Washington, the Barco government that took over in 1986—a Liberal landslide on a low vote—started to pursue the Medellín cartel. Escobar Inc. responded by ordering hits on leading judges, politicians and law-enforcement officials. More than 200 groups of paramilitaries were declared illegal due to links with the cocaine trade, as the Barco administration stepped up its efforts after Escobar's hired guns had assassinated centre-left presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán in August 1989. The following year, Escobar's teen killers shot down the left's two presidential candidates: Carlos Pizarro, leader of M-19, and Bernardo Jaramillo of the UP. Escobar's punishment was mild enough—he was allowed to build himself a prison and staff it with his bodyguards of choice until he escaped in September 1992. His death in late 1993 at the hands of former associates—working with the Cali cartel, the DEA, the CIA, the Colombian DAS, CTI, the Army's Fourth Brigade, etc.—did not lessen the grip of the narco-paramilitary right on the political system. It merely removed its most visible head.

Gaviria's narco-construction bubble

Yet despite the multiplying forms of violence, and in stark contrast to most of Latin America, economic growth held steady in the 1980s, just as it had once flourished during *La Violencia*. The Liberal technocrat

⁴⁴ The repression of the cocaine business after the killing of Lara Bonilla helped lift it out of the crisis into which it had fallen in 1983: the day of Lara Bonilla's burial, for example, in Calamar (Guaviare) the price of a kilo of coca paste (*bazuco*) cost 200,000 pesos; a week later it cost 800,000 pesos: Molano, *Selva Adentro*, p. 100.

César Gaviria, elected in 1990, was not satisfied. Believing that the (moderate) increase in prices that had accompanied growth was due to excessive state intervention in Colombia, which had yet to absorb the wholesome message of the Washington Consensus, he launched on a neoliberal programme intended to discipline and galvanize the economy. With the help of Álvaro Uribe, then a Liberal Party senator, Gaviria slashed the public-sector workforce and set about privatizing health care and social security, establishing the autonomy of the Central Bank, liberalizing the currency and financial sector, reducing tariffs and import quotas, and increasing turnover taxes. Oil exploration contracts were signed with the multinationals on even softer terms than before. Food imports more than tripled during the 1990s, from \$215 million to \$715 million. The area under coca cultivation also tripled in the second half of the decade, swelling to roughly 170,000 hectares in 2001; poppy production went from zero in 1989 to 61 metric tons in 1998, while Colombia continued to supply 40 per cent of US marijuana imports as well—the connexion between neoliberal agricultural policies and the spread of illicit crops could hardly have been more direct. An initial effect of the restructuring was to fuel a narco-financed construction boom, leading to rising inflation. It is no accident that an OECD report on Gaviria's reforms concluded that, of all business sectors, the drug cartels were among the most consistently favourable to his neoliberal policies—far more so than industrialists, agrarians, modern exporters or financial services (let alone the armed forces or the Church).⁴⁵

Gaviria's other major initiative was the convocation of a Constituent Assembly to produce a new and more democratic constitution. This could be seen as a second attempt to break the long political stalemate of Colombian politics. EPL, M-19 and two other guerrilla groups, the Quintín Lame and PRT, laid down their arms to participate in the process, which did indeed grant historic rights of recognition to indigenous peoples. But while the resulting 1991 Constitution attempted to streamline the judiciary and limit the authority of the executive, introducing proportional representation for senatorial contests and popular election of departmental governors, previously appointed by the president, it did nothing to curb arbitrary military and police powers, or break the stranglehold of the two-party system. That was not its intention. Gaviria's schemes had little of the moral impulse behind Betancur's efforts—

⁴⁵ Sebastian Edwards, *The Economics and Politics of Transition to an Open Market Economy: Colombia*, OECD Report 2001, pp. 39–41 and Table 3.3

though he sought to negotiate with Escobar, he pursued a 'holistic war' against the FARC, bombing and occupying their headquarters in May 1992—and they yielded meagre, if not perverse fruit. The new constitution's rigid provisions for decentralization, including compulsory central government transfers to the provinces, strengthened the power of local party bosses, Liberals in particular, increasing political corruption—which the World Bank estimates costs Colombia some \$2.2 billion a year—and driving the country into fiscal deficit.⁴⁶

Appropriately, the next Liberal President Ernesto Samper (1994–98) was soon mired in allegations over multi-million dollar contributions to his campaign fund by the Cali cartel, forcing the US finally to decertify the country's efforts in the war on drugs. Meanwhile, a severe tightening of monetary policy by the Central Bank had cut into investment and the construction industry plunged into recession. The IMF, summoned in 1998 to sort out Colombia's worst economic crisis since the 1930s, could not have been more sympathetic, its 1999 structural reform programme making provision for 'flexibility' in the face of 'events outside government control'.

Guerrilla mutations

In this general deadlock, the deepening corruption and involution of the Colombian establishment had by now started to contaminate those who set out to resist it. Without the voracious dynamism of the cocaine economy, at least some sectors of the oligarchy might have taken change—above all, agrarian reform—more seriously; had that happened, the negotiators might have carried more weight within the insurgent camp. So too, without the income from *el gramaje*, the FARC would have had to consider a strategy of political reform more carefully, rather than to stick to military confrontation. As it was, during the 1990s the insurgents exhibited the fundamental paradox of an increasing political delegitimation accompanied by startling organizational growth. In November 1992, a group of the country's leading progressive writers and intellectuals, Gabriel García Márquez among them, wrote an open letter to the FARC and ELN, calling upon them to recognize that the wheel of history had turned, to lay down arms and pursue reform through peaceful means. Throughout the 1980s, the guerrillas had been able to count on the sympathy of a substantial minority of Colombia's cultural

⁴⁶ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Colombia: Country Profile, 2002–2003*.

producers, and on links to the more militant unions. In the 1990s they were very much on their own.

Nevertheless, their financial and territorial expansion—accompanied by the resort to techniques, such as kidnappings and car bombings, that had been pioneered by Escobar—multiplied exponentially, with the FARC now generating an estimated \$500 million a year from coca-paste taxes and extortion. Whereas in 1978, they had 17 fronts in peripheral regions, by 1994 the FARC had 105 fronts and influenced the politics of more than half of all Colombian municipalities. The ELN grew from a few hundred in the early 1980s to an estimated 5,000–7,000.⁴⁷ By the turn of the century, over 90 per cent of municipalities in zones of recent colonization were shaped by the presence of guerrillas. Between them, the FARC and the ELN operated across more than 40 per cent of national territory, though the FARC were much stronger and territorially expansive. In January 2000, General Tapias, then head of Colombia's armed forces—not necessarily a reliable source—estimated that the FARC had 20,000 East German assault rifles as well as grenade launchers, communications equipment, mortars, SAM-12 surface-to-air missiles and a small air force.

Plan Colombia

Greater still, however, has been the expansion of the paramilitaries. The AUC grew from several thousand fighters when it was officially founded in 1997 to between 12,000 and 14,000 in 2002. They, too, have their own air force but, unlike the FARC, they are also able to make use of US-donated government helicopters. The number of massacres—most, though not all of them, committed by paramilitaries working in tandem with the military—quadrupled from the mid- to late-1990s. With the election of the Conservative President Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002), the Clinton Administration re-certified Bogotá's 'war on drugs' which it then proceeded to fund, under the auspices of Plan Colombia, to the tune of \$1.3 billion, most of it earmarked for US-manufactured military hardware.

The Pastrana government, at the same time, marked a third attempt to resolve the paralysis of the political system. With the backing of the

⁴⁷ Unlike the FARC, the ELN have never benefited from the narcoeconomy, since they do not tax coca cultivation in areas they control—a legacy of their background in liberation theology.

Cacaos, a powerful group of industrialists and financiers who favoured negotiations with the insurgents over all-out war, Pastrana initiated a 'peace process' with the FARC, withdrawing the armed forces from a demilitarized zone of some 16,200 hectares in November 1998 as a preliminary concession. By the end of 1999, the two sides had approved a twelve-point programme for negotiation, including issues of agrarian reform, human rights, natural resources and socio-economic restructuring. But Pastrana had less power to deliver these than Betancur. Despite occasional high points—one came in early 2000, when FARC representatives and Colombian government officials went on a 'learning tour' of European capitals; another in June 2001, when the FARC released 363 captured police and soldiers in exchange for eleven (not, as promised, fifty) of their own—the peace process was stillborn. The FARC repeatedly withdrew from preliminary negotiations because of the government's unwillingness or inability to rein in the mushrooming paramilitary forces, and used the demilitarized zone to prepare for future battle, while denouncing Plan Colombia, not without reason, as effectively a declaration of war.

Regardless of their many strategic and tactical blunders, the FARC can hardly be blamed for their scepticism. Colombian history has long taught that 'negotiation' means preparation for war and that 'amnesty' for guerrillas is a synonym for extra-judicial execution. Throughout Pastrana's presidency, the cattle-ranching, narco-paramilitary AUC, allied with factions of the military and police, continued to massacre the social base of the FARC and ELN. Finally, on 20 February 2002, under intense pressure from the military, ascendant ruling-class fractions and the media, Pastrana ordered the Colombian armed forces to re-take the DMZ.⁴⁸

Who were the most important lobbies behind this reverse course? Along with multinational banana companies, palm-oil processors and flower plantations, the narco-barons and cattle ranchers of Antioquia and Córdoba had made sure they were protected from the consequences of neoliberal agricultural policies. All were adamantly opposed to Pastrana's peace process and called for increased state-led violence against the insurgencies, broadly defined to include anyone working for progressive social change.⁴⁹ Their candidate in the 2002 election was

⁴⁸ See Garry Leech, *Killing Peace: Colombia's Conflict and the Failure of US Intervention*, New York 2001.

⁴⁹ Oil giants like Occidental and BP Amoco also opposed the peace process. All these groups employ paramilitaries as a capitalist insurance policy.

Álvaro Uribe Vélez: he was, in the words of Castaño, 'the man closest to our philosophy'.

Beef and cocaine

The mid-70s rise of the Uribe family was, as we have seen, startling. Educated, after his father's sudden spectacular good fortune, at Harvard and Oxford, Uribe served two terms as a Liberal senator, from 1986 to 1994. As governor of Antioquia between 1995 and 1997, he set about 'legalizing and regulating' the anti-guerrilla militias by creating 'Zones of Public Order' and powering up the *Convivires*, or Rural Vigilance Committees—brainchild of Gaviria's Minister of Defence, Rafael Pardo, and structurally similar to the Peruvian *rondas campesinas* or the Guatemalan Civil Defence Patrols of the 1980s. Within two years the *Convivires* had displaced some 200,000 peasants, mainly from Urabá. Amnesty International and other human rights groups signalled close connexions between *Convivires* and paramilitaries. The organic unity between the two was manifest at the end of 1999 when the Constitutional Court banned the *Convivires* for numerous massacres of unarmed civilians, their foot soldiers simply passed into the ranks of the AUC.

Uribe's ranch in Córdoba borders that of Salvatore Mancuso, military commander of the AUC and, like Carlos Castaño, wanted for extradition to the us. Uribe affects to know him only as a neighbour. One key aide in his 2002 presidential campaign was General Rito Alejo del Río, who had been dismissed by Pastrana for links to the paramilitaries; another was Pedro Juan Moreno Villa.⁵⁰ The indignation with which the us state and media treated Samper, contaminated by mere receipt of campaign assistances from the drug lords, seems comical in retrospect. Uribe's links to the inmost nexus of narcotics, and its peculiar forms of terrorism, are far more intimate; yet he has also been warmly embraced by the Colombian oligarchy, whose mouthpiece, *Semana*, declared him 'Man of the Year' in 2002.

Uribe was elected on a simple, clear-cut programme. There would be no more attempts to treat with subversion. The only solution to the insurgencies was to extirpate them, with an iron fist. His first steps as president were to declare a State of Emergency—on 11 August, a

⁵⁰ Contreras and Garavito, *El Señor de las Sombras*, pp. 35–43, 65–72, 92, 167.

mere four days after his inauguration—and open ‘negotiations’ with the ACCU, the regional (Córdoba–Urabá) paramilitary command that has been Castaño’s power base since he announced that he was quitting the AUC in 2002 for its failure to clamp down on drug-trafficking (seen by many as a first step towards cutting a deal with the US DEA that would allow him to enter the political arena).²¹ The AUC had no sooner disbanded than it was born anew, however. The quickest way for Uribe to fulfill his election pledge of ‘strengthening’ the armed forces would be to amnesty and dismantle the paramilitaries before recruiting their hardened troops into the Colombian Army. Meanwhile, he has levied a special tax on the wealthy to fund the war effort, to supplement the \$2 billion disbursed so far under Plan Colombia. The military and police budget is scheduled to jump from 3.5 to 5.8 per cent of GDP by the end of his tenure. US troops, aircraft and surveillance technology are all now operating in Colombia, in support—or guidance—of the ‘bandit-extermination’ campaigns now under way.

War to the death

The FARC’s southeastern heartlands have been declared ‘Special Militarized Zones’. In the north, ‘Zones of Consolidation and Rehabilitation’ have been proclaimed in Arauca, Sucre and Bolívar. Here one finds neither civilian authorities nor human-rights investigators, just military men making administrative decisions. On 31 March of this year, sixteen journalists fled Arauca under threat of death shortly after a colleague was murdered. A bill to further tighten restrictions on the press is under consideration in Congress, where an estimated 20 to 30 per cent of deputies are tied to the AUC.²² Another would place human-rights NGOs, which several Colombian generals have recently equated with ‘subversion’, under stepped-up surveillance. Seventeen human-rights activists were murdered in 2002 and if the bill is made law, no doubt that number will rise. A new anti-terrorism bill, approved in late June 2003, grants police powers to the military nationwide. And Uribe’s major objective of recruiting a million paid informers to help the government has been surpassed: 500,000 more than planned have signed up.

The human costs of this drive are all too apparent. In late January 2003, four indigenous leaders in the Cuna village of Paya, on the

²¹ Gary Leech, ‘Reinventing Carlos Castaño’, www.colombiareport.org

²² See Julia Sweig, ‘What Kind of War for Colombia?’, *Foreign Affairs*, Sept–Oct 2002.

Panamanian side of the border, were killed by soldiers from the Bloque Élmér Cárdenas of the ACCU, and the rest of the villagers displaced in order to clear the path for the Pan-American Highway—a pre-requisite for the implementation of the FTAA. Both the road and the trade agreement will favour cattle ranchers, palm-oil plantation owners, logging companies and the banana multinationals that operate in Urabá and contribute financially to the ACCU. White supremacy is built into this 'free trade and development project', which spells either massacre or displacement for Afro-Colombians as well as the Cuna and the Embera.⁵³ Though not officially inscribed in the 'peace negotiations' between the government and the ACCU/AUC, soldiers from these groups will no doubt continue to operate with impunity along the Panamanian border. So will those from the Bloque Metro, a 'dissident' ACCU command who have taken over the Comuna 13 area of Medellín—site for the mouth of the proposed 'Tunnel to the West', leading to Urabá—following Operation Orion, an Uribe-ordered mobilization of 3,000 joint task-force troops in mid-October in which dozens of civilians died, hundreds were arrested and thousands displaced.⁵⁴

So far, marching in lockstep with his imperial superiors, Uribe has united the political elite and a myopic middle class behind him. In mid-January 2003 he was handsomely rewarded for his efforts when the World Bank approved a four-year loan for \$3.3 billion and the IMF a conditional stand-by loan for \$2.1 billion. Since 1993, Colombian military spending has jumped from \$360 million to \$815 million, while the external debt now represents 55 per cent of GDP, up from 30 per cent in 1996. In April this year, Colombia became the only South American country to join the Anglo-American 'coalition' for the invasion of Iraq. In exchange, as noted, the US Congress awarded Uribe an extra \$104 million in early April, while the IDB approved a \$1.6 billion loan in early May, soon after Uribe had met in Washington with Paul Wolfowitz and General James Hill, head of US Southern Command, to request that unused war material from Iraq be shipped to Colombia.⁵⁵

⁵³ Alfredo Molano, 'Cacarica y Paya', *El Espectador*, 26 January 2003.

⁵⁴ '00', aka 'Rodrigo', head of Bloque Metro, has declared his willingness to fight his mentor, Castaño, rather than negotiate with Uribe. He insists that the narcos have hijacked negotiations. Hence a fratricidal micro-war between the ACCU and Bloque Metro rages in and around Medellín.

⁵⁵ Visiting Bogotá in early December 2002, US Secretary of State Colin Powell promised \$537 million in military aid for Colombia for 2003, a 25 per cent increase over 2002. This year's US budget requested \$553 million for Colombia for 2004.

Nevertheless, rumblings of dissent are starting to be heard. In April 2003 the Constitutional Court ruled Uribe's State of Emergency—twice extended since August 2002—unconstitutional. Led by the indigenous organization in the Cauca, CRIC, a mass protest march took place in October. The nineteen-point referendum that Uribe is planning to put to the country, delaying local elections and instituting a two-year public-spending freeze and cap on pensions, has produced a murmur of discontent and might be jeopardized by abstentions, thanks in large measure to trade union agitation. There have also been protests over the planned privatization of EMCALI, a utilities and telecoms company, and ECOPETROL. Uribe has relaxed credit regimes in an attempt to stimulate another Gaviria-style consumption and construction boom, but with import demand from the US (and Venezuela) weakening, oil and coffee prices falling and a deteriorating world market, the economic outlook for his regime is not unclouded.

Scorched earth

Still, the fate of the government will be decided by the success of its drive to terminate armed opposition to *capitalismo a la colombiana*, permanently. The exceptional longevity of the guerrillas in Colombia, as we have seen, has been a product of four main factors: the closure of the political system; the extent of the country's agrarian frontiers; its highly divided and corrugated topography; and the contingencies of the coca boom. High-tech weaponry and surveillance systems, of the kind tested out in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq, will be called upon to overcome the last three. Aerial fumigation of wide swathes of the countryside, to destroy coca cultivation, is now in full swing. Washington and Bogotá are already claiming unprecedented success in this campaign. In December 2002 a UN study claimed that coca planting in Colombia had been cut by 30 per cent in the past year, to 252,000 acres.⁵⁶

Currently over 35,000 acres are being destroyed every month. 'Towns dedicated to the harvest and production of cocaine have been abandoned like ghost towns in the old American West, their stores empty, their people vanished', reported the *Los Angeles Times* in early June: 'Of more than a dozen farmers interviewed in mid-May, not a single one planned to continue planting coca. Repeated visits by the crop dusters wiped

⁵⁶ 'Colombia's Politics', *Economist*, 5 June 2003.

out the coca as well as nearby food crops and convinced them to give up the business'.⁵⁷

Such fumigation has been an integral part of Plan Colombia since 2000, using highly concentrated doses of Monsanto's Round-Up Ultra mixed with Cosmo-Flux, a chemical compound formerly supplied by ICI that makes glyphosate stick to whatever it touches. Spraying this toxic compound, US mercenaries have destroyed fish, wildlife, livestock, rivers and legal crops, as well as coca fields, throughout southern Colombia. Fumigation has caused widespread respiratory and skin infections among the civilian population, especially children. Three planes—two of them used to fumigate coca fields—working on contract for the Defence Department have crashed or been shot down since 13 February, as well as four of their escort Black Hawk helicopters. Five US mercenaries and one Colombian policeman have died. The FARC have declared the remaining three mercenaries prisoners of war, and 3,000 Colombian soldiers have been mobilized to locate them. Forty-nine US Special Forces soldiers were deployed to aid the 'search and rescue' mission in late February, and one hundred more arrived as part of Plan Colombia, representing a 50 per cent increase in the number of US troops stationed in the country over the past six months.⁵⁸

Of course, in the absence of any crop-substitution programme, as even the *Economist* has noted, terror on the coca frontiers and unemployment in the towns can only increase. But this is not a cost to make the regime blink. If past precedent were anything to go by, emulation of Venezuelan counter-insurgency success in Falcón in the 1960s, or Fujimori's in Ayacucho and the Upper Huallaga Valley in the 1990s, would require a capacity to mobilize a peasant constituency, both hostile to the guerrillas and amenable to anti-communist clientelism, of a kind that has never existed in the jungles and tropical plains of the south-east. It remains to be seen whether the arrival of the Colombian Army and accompanying paramilitaries will create one. Scorching the earth from the air, to render any economic life impossible in the rebel zones, could be an alternative—evoking the terrible slogan coined by Estanislao Zuleta: 'If we cannot and do not want to modify the circumstances that

⁵⁷ T. Christian Miller, 'Major Cocaine Source Wanes', *Los Angeles Times*, 8 June 2003.

⁵⁸ Nicole Elana Karsin, 'Escalating US Casualties in Colombia', 14 April 2003: www.colombiareport.org

determine these manifestations of misery, marginalization and despair, then let us eliminate the victims'. Nevertheless, a strategy along these lines will not alter the first condition of the insurgencies, an exclusionary political order. It will armour-plate it even further. In Peru, Fujimori once projected an image—a hard-working, straight-talking, implacable foe of subversion—more or less identical to that enjoyed by Uribe today. Colombia's civilian elite is unlikely to allow a similar personal trajectory. But there is no sign it is willing to change its system.

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'MANAGING' NATIONALISM

NATIONALISM IS A will-o-the-wisp. Now you see it, now you don't. Or, more precisely, now you see something reasonably definite, clearly demarcated from other things, and now you see it all over the place. Writers talk of British or English nationalism in the eighteenth century, a passion expressing hostility to the French. But nationalism only makes sense as a criterion of the proper composition of a modern state, and nothing of the kind was involved in British feeling against the French at that time. The term 'nationalism' is a problem because it has been used to cover both collective self-regard expressing itself as enmity to another collectivity, and a doctrine about the criterion for a proper state. The first meaning finds instances at many times and places, the second is modern.

With some exaggeration, one may say that these ambiguities of 'nationalism' were decisively clarified by Elie Kedourie.¹ Before Kedourie, nationalism lurked in every corner of history, discoverable in any collective form of self-assertion. After Kedourie, no careful thinker would attribute it to non-modern times and places. He showed that it was a doctrine 'invented' in the early nineteenth century. In his article on Kedourie in *New Left Review*, 'In Praise of Empires Past', Brendan O'Leary wants to dismantle this achievement.² His is a bravura piece, occasionally crawling pedantically along, at other times featuring intrepid logic-defying leaps, as when Kedourie's repudiation of prediction becomes a rejection of generalization *tout court*.

The issue here is one that needs keeping under review. For although Kedourie's basic judgement has mostly been accepted by students of nationalism, tendencies to recidivism continue to crop up. Eric Hobsbawm, for example, more or less accepts Kedourie's verdict, although without mentioning him, but the next moment can be found

toying with eleventh century 'proto-nationalisms'. Kedourie wrote as a historian, which meant that he was interested in the circumstantial explanation of a certain way of thinking, and its antecedents. Like others, he numbered Rousseau and Herder among the latter, and added Kant's theory of self-determination. But he argued that nationalism was a political doctrine that only took recognizable shape in response to the universalism of the French Revolution. He thought nationalism an essentially opportunistic response to various kinds of collective grievance: in his eyes, it had no 'essence' (*pace* O'Leary). It could espouse republics at one time or monarchies at another, and might quarrel or ally with other ideologies such as socialism, as the exigencies of the moment suggested to those who picked up or perhaps developed the doctrine. Nationalism was an instrument of practical action, not an explanatory philosophical idea. That was why an understanding of it had to be essentially historical. Most of its notions, moreover, take for granted the modern sovereign state; they make no sense in the mediaeval period or in oriental empires.

O'Leary contests Kedourie's famous first sentence: 'Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century.' Strictly speaking, to be sure, in history no idea is 'invented'—'emerged' might have been a safer term, and would have avoided O'Leary's objection that an invention needs a single inventor, and Kedourie does not provide one. The real issue, however, lies in O'Leary's attempt to turn Kedourie's flank by asking: why can we not find nationalism in the American or French Revolutions? The answer to this lies in culture and style. The Americans had a grievance against the British government which they formulated not as the oppression of a culture but as a denial of rights. They were not even sure whether they were one nation or thirteen. The French dreamt of reviving the Roman republic; their language and attitudes appealed to the universal rather than the particular.

That nationalism emerged out of some of the enthusiasms of the eighteenth century is no doubt true. But when did it 'crystallize' in a vocabulary, a set of emotions, and a doctrine capable of justifying a certain sort of political involvement? Since Kedourie refers to figures like Kant, Schiller or Frederick the Great, O'Leary asks why he did not date nationalism back to them. The answer might be couched in the analogy

¹ *Nationalism*, London 1960.

² NLR 18, November–December 2002, pp. 106–30.

of a photographic plate: at what point has the image actually appeared? In trying to capture the coming into being of a new idea, I would not myself talk of 'catalysts' subsequently 'mushrooming', as O'Leary does. What he means by this mixed metaphor is, I think, that nationalism suddenly turns up all over the place in—and indeed beyond—Europe, from which he draws the conclusion that the 'real cause' of nationalism lies in 'specific historical developments', presumably the arrival of modern industry. He thus rejects diffusionism in favour of what one might call 'material causation'. The broad issue distinguishing these alternative explanations is that of history versus sociology. Kedourie's history of ideas interprets nationalism as a response by political actors, within the crucial contexts of collective grievance and the sovereign state, to changing events. O'Leary's sociology seeks to explain nationalism as a phenomenon 'unavoidably' and 'predictably' issuing from modernization. He personalizes this into a dispute between Kedourie and Gellner, who did on occasion discuss the issue.

Both were friends of mine (as indeed, I hope, is O'Leary), so we are not entangled here in anything excessively personal. I happen to agree with Kedourie, and have had my say in criticism of Gellner. O'Leary's interpretation of all of this does, however, need some clearing up. His criticism of Kedourie seems to be the complaint of a partisan of nationalism, for whom it is an understandable and on the whole admirable phenomenon. In this light, Kedourie becomes a conservative exponent of the benefits of empire, whose outlook can be traced to his social origins as a Baghdadi Jew growing up between the wars. In denying that there was an appearance of nationalism prior to the nineteenth century, possibly outside Europe too (in South America, for example), Kedourie—so O'Leary claims—sought to 'place the blame [for it] squarely on German romanticism'.

Kedourie may, of course, have got various things wrong. But to attribute to him a desire to blame the emergence of nationalism on an aesthetic movement is so wild as to suggest a wider animus. Thus we learn that Kedourie's *Nationalism* 'shares some of the confusions of Oakeshott's epistemology, in which philosophy has no impact on the world, whereas practical ideas or ideologies do'. I believe Oakeshott was right about this, but that is an argument for another occasion. O'Leary, however, goes on to speak of Oakeshott's 'contempt for, and fear of, intellectuals', which is not even a plausible caricature. Kedourie is further patronised

as writing 'a loyal Oakeshottian essay', and as one who in the fifties was 'loyal to the Allies' recent war effort'. Since loyalty is an emotion, not an argument, the intention seems to be to diminish Kedourie's rationality. By the time we discover that Kedourie's historical analysis fits 'comfortably the temperament of an observant, quietist and educated Jew from Baghdad, outraged at Zionism and Arab nationalism', it is fairly clear that O'Leary's sociology of knowledge has run out of control.

What is O'Leary's basic concern? He wishes to establish nationalism as a freestanding political response to modernization, and to push its beginnings back to the point where any 'element' of the doctrine can be found before the nineteenth century. Thus he attempts a *reductio ad absurdum* by first dating its arrival to Kant, whom Kedourie had fingered as a philosophical godfather of the doctrine—and then, since Locke developed a notion of self-determination a couple of generations before Kant, why not all the way back to Locke? For that matter, of course, we can find verbal formulae that might suggest the idea of democratic self-determination even earlier, say in Algernon Sidney, so why not a seventeenth-century origin for the doctrine? Kedourie himself was later to suggest that the nationalist passion for religious and cultural uniformity was a recurring theme in European politics all the way back to Theodosius. So why did he have to say nationalism was a nineteenth-century invention?

The answer is that the meaning, and hence the occurrence, of nationalism depends on context. Attempts to clarify this type of question used to distinguish between influences, which are specific, and affinities, whose abstract character can transcend times and places. Locke in talking about self-determination was concerned with ethics and agency, Algernon Sidney about an aristocratic republic. A historical identity is not a word, or a form of words, but human action and utterance responding to a context, and contexts are specific to the time. One may indeed, as Gellner did, generalize social situations and try out a sociology of nationalism. Both approaches may yield interesting results. But O'Leary has other fish to fry. He wants to set nationalism up as a phenomenon in political science which may be studied—indeed 'managed'—in a more or less scientific kind of way.

Against Kedourie's view that nationalism is characterized by an ideological style of politics, O'Leary remarks: 'Nationalists have generally

been this-worldly, intent on the revival or renewal rather than the eradication of their own cultural traditions; they have celebrated and sought to reinforce their own civil societies and have campaigned for their own states'. Some no doubt fit this description, some not. But O'Leary is concerned with the practical question: 'Can nationalism be managed and expressed in ways that achieve stability and world order in a form compatible with constitutionalism and democracy?' That was something Kedourie believed impossible. For myself, I doubt it. In another place O'Leary can be found toying with the statistical conditions under which federalism might be the solution to nationalist tensions in states within existing boundaries. Canada hasn't broken up, at least not yet, but the Balkans don't look so manageable, Indonesia and other places in Asia are worrying, Lebanon is only just recovering from an earlier bout of managed consociationalism and as for Africa . . . We can all keep our fingers crossed. If nationalism is an epiphenomenon of some such social condition as modernization, then the conditions for its management may be discoverable and put to work. If on the other hand, nationalism is a class of doctrine whose outcome and implications are as unpredictable as everything else human, then the sceptical historian may be a better guide to its character than the political scientist.

STATUS QUO PATRIOTISM

KENNETH MINOGUE HAS paid my article 'In Praise of Empires Past: Myths and Method of Kedourie's *Nationalism*' the tribute of a critical response, even if the compliment is somewhat back-handed, since he taxes me with pedantry, illogic and lack of control. He hopes, nevertheless, that he is still a friend. He is: but among the lesser duties of friendship are to tell a friend when he has missed the point, and when egocentricity goes so far that it threatens identity loss. My critic presents himself as the doughty defender of Kedourie's *Nationalism*; in fact he is defending a less famous text, *Nationalism*, written some years later by one K. R. Minogue,¹ and what he has modestly subtitled 'Minogue's Theory of Nationalism' in a recent encyclopaedia.² Let me remove initial confusions. He and I (with Kedourie and Gellner) agree that nationalism, understood as a doctrine about the legitimate foundation of states, is modern. Minogue responds as if I wish to 'dismantle' the modernist theory of nationalism. I do not. I want to throw out the bathwater, not the baby. By this I mean that, unlike Gellner,³ Kedourie or Minogue I recognize the significant difficulties in that theory, to which Anthony Smith has devoted his life's labour.⁴ My argument was that Kedourie did not achieve the decisive clarification that Minogue suggests; that he erred as an historian of ideas; and that his later work in *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* plainly contradicts his earlier claims in ways that he appears not to have noticed.

Minogue concedes that I have a—pedantic—point in criticizing Kedourie's thesis that nationalism was 'invented' in the early nineteenth century, but mounts his defence around the claim that there was no nationalism in the American or French revolutions. For Minogue and Kedourie nationalism proper, the full photograph, only emerges in German intellectual reactions to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The young Minogue was aware the USA posed a problem: 'It is very easy to see the

[War of Independence] in nationalist terms. Yet it would seem that the people of the American colonies, while they certainly developed a rapid awareness of themselves as Americans, did not think seriously of themselves as an American nation. Their struggle came too early for them to conduct it in that way.' How improper of the Americans to display nationalist traits before the Germans, or for the *Federalist Papers* to be published in 1788; but fortunately, they took these matters more lightly, with a better sense of humour than those Teutonic Romantics.

For me, as for many others, liberal nationalism, viz. the doctrine that the nation—or the people, or the citizenry (the terms were used as synonyms)—should be the source of political legitimacy, developed in the USA, Britain (including England), France, Ireland and Latin America *before* (or in some cases simultaneously with) the flowering of the more overtly cultural or ethnic nationalisms of central Europe. Nationalism came first, in short, amongst those in (or in imminent) possession of states. This position is scarcely unusual. So far as the United States, Great Britain and France are concerned, it was the historiographical orthodoxy before Kedourie wrote, and has remained so among those not wholly immersed in life at the London School of Economics.

The reason why it matters that Kedourie asserted nationalism was invented 'at the beginning of the nineteenth century' is that only this dating enables the German Romantics to be put in the dock as the primary suspects for its confection. Minogue knows this is a weak point, since elsewhere he has written that 'scholarly opinion now recognizes, however, that nationalism is a doctrine invented *at the end of*

¹ Minogue's *Nationalism* was the sincerest form of flattery towards Kedourie's book of the same title: it has a similar structure, the same number of chapters, and similar prejudices. It even begins, as did Kedourie's, with a quote from Yeats, albeit 1916 rather than 1919. But Minogue was not Kedourie's parrot, even if at times he can sound like Oakeshott's.

² Kenneth Minogue, 'Nationalism and Patriotism: Minogue's Theory of Nationalism', in Athena Leoussi, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism*, New Brunswick 2001, pp. 230–2.

³ Brendan O'Leary, 'Gellner's Diagnoses of Nationalism: A Critical Overview or What is Living and What is Dead in Gellner's Philosophy of Nationalism?' in John Hall, ed., *The State of the Nation*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 40–90.

⁴ See his *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford 1986; *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, London 1996; and *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates About Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Oxford 2000.

the eighteenth century.⁵ My objection to Kedourie was that he did not demonstrate through standard scholarly evidence that many of the fundamental tenets of what he defined as nationalism are first found—or found at all in the case of ‘national self-determination’—in the German thinkers he indicts. The language of republicanism was one of the discourses in which liberal nationalism widely expressed itself on its first outings: that was certainly true of the United Irishmen.

In reply, Minogue writes that Kedourie ‘thought nationalism an essentially opportunistic response to various kinds of collective grievance: in his eyes, it had no “essence” (*pace* O’Leary)’. It was in fact the young Minogue, not Kedourie, who offered a ‘general description of nationalism’ as ‘a political movement depending on a feeling of collective grievance against foreigners’. As he put it, ‘nationalism teaches that the fact of foreign rule itself is an affront to human dignity’.⁶ Now, of course, nationalism may often be a response to collective grievances, and nationalists can be as opportunistic as other human beings. But to be nationalists they must have some recognizable core beliefs that make it coherent to apply this category to them. No ‘deep’—or allegedly mistaken—philosophical essentialism is involved here. The issue turns rather on the distinction that Minogue’s own theory makes between loyalty to the state (patriotism) and loyalty to the nation (nationalism).⁷

This is a good distinction, one that is often occluded or misunderstood. But in making it Minogue includes a surreptitious move. He endorses the national state as the site of patriotism, and approves of ‘nationality’ (with its passports and citizenship rights) as a source of value, in tension with universal or ‘Olympian’ values; at the same time he repudiates nationalism. His sympathies with at least two existing national states, the USA and the UK, are well advertised—indeed, this antipodean is a most patriotic, Euro-sceptical Briton. Why is he then not a nationalist?

⁵ Kenneth Minogue, ‘Olympianism and the Denigration of Nationality’ in Claudio Véliz, ed., *The Worth of Nations*, Boston 1993, p. 73. Observe Minogue’s footnote to this assertion: ‘The crucial work here is *Nationalism* by Elie Kedourie’. The Young Minogue did his homework better: ‘On most views the decisive move [in the emergence of nationalism] came in the eighteenth century’; i.e. he was aware that Kedourie’s chronology was an outlier (Minogue, *Nationalism*, pp. 10, 17). The Old Minogue (1993) credits Kedourie with establishing a consensus with which he in fact had disagreed. The Vintage Minogue (2003) now regards the matter as ‘pedantic’.

⁶ Minogue, *Nationalism*, p. 25

⁷ ‘Nationalism and Patriotism’.

Because, so his argument runs, nationalists are (by their 'essence?') disaffected from their state, or at least with the state in which they reside. 'Whereas nationalism aims at a *future* civil state in which the *nation* will be self-governing, the patriot enjoys a *present* condition of civic involvement.' There cannot, by definitional fiat, be any satisfied nationalists or nationalisms.

This is what might be called 'minologue', rather than dialogue. Do successful nationalists morph into patriots, or is it just impossible for nationalists to be successful? The effect of this variation on an old trope—my patriotism is good, your nationalism is bad—is to legitimate the defence of existing states, and denigrate any questioning of them. Nationalism can be dismissed as 'an ideology for the young', a 'pure-minded rejection of the compromises of adult authority', 'involvement in a fantasy, and those involved in a fantasy are liable to violent and unpredictable rage if the world fails to fit their dreams.'⁸ But why should those with a less complacent view of the array of states current at any given point of time, or an inclination to inspect the world as it is, be thought confused when they distinguish between nations with and without states, or satisfied as opposed to dissatisfied nationalisms?

So far as method goes, at issue here is not a conflict between history (Kedourie) and Gellner (sociology). My claim was that Kedourie's *Nationalism* is defective history. In showing that with his procedures one could as legitimately make Locke the ancestor of liberal nationalism as Kant of cultural nationalism, I did not, of course, suggest that either proposition was true. Gellner's view, by contrast, was that Kedourie's history was accurate enough (apart from a mistreatment of Kant), but had no explanatory force. Minogue, Kedourie and I in fact agree on something with which Gellner did not, namely the importance of political ideas (what Oakeshottians call 'practical doctrines'). But I hold to the common-sense view that ideas resonate more in some contexts than others. It is in the democratization of the modern state and in the multiple dimensions of modernization that nationalism resonates—as doctrine and as mass sentiment—more than it did or could have done in the past.

Minogue sees me as an orthodox or devout Gellnerian. But I am a critic of the thesis that 'industrialization causes nationalism'. Nor do I anywhere reject 'diffusionism' as such (did Gellner?). But with Gellner I believe it is

⁸ Minogue, *Nationalism*, pp. 8, 32.

possible to differentiate types of nationalism, and to provide convincing historical *and* sociological explanations of their origins and trajectories. In Oakeshott's landscape there would appear to be just philosophy, history and 'practical doctrines': and it's true I don't live in this wilderness. In Gellner's there is too much functionalism, but there is a profound understanding of modernity, and a serious respect for science, including social science. I am not completely at home there, but it is certainly a more congenial environment. One can admire Gellner without making a cult figure of him; he would have despised anyone who did.

So far as Kedourie is concerned, it is not because I am an avid 'partisan of nationalism' that I described him as a conservative exponent of the benefits of empire. Kedourie's writings, cited carefully, demonstrate that he was such an exponent. That is plain from his early essay on 'Minorities', and finds uninhibited expression in his tribute to Acton at the close of his *Nationalism*. No 'rampaging' sociology of knowledge is at work in my portrait of his person, which was based on his writings, including his own recollections of his life; the tributes to him published after his death; and my memories of him. The sole point on which I venture a speculation is his motive for blaming German Romanticism for the onset of full-blown nationalism. Nor did I 'patronize' him; if I did not regard the man and his work as significant I would not have wrestled with them.

Minogue holds that nationalism is 'one term in the fundamental (and ultimately unresolvable) conflict in human affairs between universalism and particularism'.⁹ I have no quarrel with that—who could? But Minogue questions any interest in a political science of conflict regulation, contemptuously referring to me as 'toying' with statistics on the conditions under which federalism and nationalism can cohabit.¹⁰ Managing conflicts involves coping with intractable situations; and regulation—rather than resolution—may be all that is possible in many national, ethnic and communal conflicts. No-one knows in advance which conflicts are 'unresolvable' through institutional arrangements. Minogue doubts in advance that the political management of such conflicts could ever be informed by reliable social science. I think it worth trying to develop usable knowledge on the subject.

⁹ 'Nationalism and Patriotism', p. 232.

¹⁰ See my 'An Iron Law of Federations? A (neo-Diceyan) theory of the Necessity of a Federal Staatsvolk, and of Consociational Rescue', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 7, no. 3.

FREDRIC JAMESON

FEAR AND LOATHING IN GLOBALIZATION

HAS THE AUTHOR of *Neuromancer* really 'changed his style'? Has he even 'stopped' writing Science Fiction, as some old-fashioned critics have put it, thinking thereby to pay him a compliment? Maybe, on the contrary, he is moving closer to the 'cyberpunk' with which he is often associated, but which seems more characteristically developed in the work of his sometime collaborator Bruce Sterling. In any case, the representational apparatus of Science Fiction, having gone through innumerable generations of technological development and well-nigh viral mutation since the onset of that movement, is sending back more reliable information about the contemporary world than an exhausted realism (or an exhausted modernism either).

William Gibson, now the author of *Pattern Recognition*, has certainly more often illustrated that other coinage, 'cyberspace', and its inner network of global communication and information, than the object world of late commodification through which the latest novel carefully gropes its way.¹ To be sure, Sterling celebrated the hackers, the heroic pirates of cyberspace, but without Gibson's tragic intensity—portraying them as the oddballs and marginals of the new frontiers to come. The rush and exhilaration of his books, rather alien to the cooler Gibson, has always seemed to me to derive as much from global entrepreneurship, and the excitement of the money to be made, as from paranoia.

But that excitement also expresses the truth of emergent globalization, and Sterling deserves more than a mere paragraph or parenthesis here. The novels are often episodic, but stories like those collected in *A Good*

Old-fashioned Future are authentic artifacts of postmodernity and little masterpieces in their own right, offering a Cook's tour of the new global way-stations and the piquant dissonances between picturesque travellers and the future cities they suddenly find themselves in. Tokyo, to be sure (Tokyo now and forever!), in which a Japanese-American federal prosecutor from Providence, Rhode Island, finds herself entangled in a conspiracy waged through ceramic cats; but also the California of misfit inventors, in which a new process for manufacturing artificial (and aerial) jellyfish threatens to convert all the oil left in the ground in Texas into so much worthless *Urschleim*. Finland then offers an unsurprisingly happy hunting ground for meetings between 60s-style terrorists and the former KGB, along with ruthless young ecological nationalists, veteran industrial spies and an aged Finnish writer of children's books immensely popular in Japan.¹

Meanwhile, Bollywood actors in flight from the Indian tax system have the luck to happen on the biggest mass grave in history, in Bolton, in an England decimated by the plague and now good only for making cheap movies on location; while, in Germany, in Düsseldorf, the new institution of the *Wende* is explored, in which—observed by a 'spex' salesman from Chattanooga—all the destructive collective movements of the time, from football hooligans to anti-modern moral majorities, periodically coincide in a ritual 'turbulence'. Indeed, it is Chattanooga, its burnt-out downtown future megastructure now a rat's nest of squatters, which serves as the stage for a more complex and characteristic encounter: between a de-sexed bicycle repairman (new gender movements have proliferated in this future, including that of Sexual Deliberation, which artificially eradicates the sex drive) and the private police of a long-serving and now senile congressional stalwart, whose artificial identity replacement (the so-called mook) risks being unmasked by an unwanted package in the mail. Finally, classic Science Fiction returns with the discovery in a Central Asian desert, by twenty-first century bounty-hunters, of an enormous artificial underground cavern, in which the Zone (the latest future form of the old East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, now run by China) has housed three world-sized human communities as an experiment in testing the viability of 400-year-long space flights. I have only incidentally mentioned some of the wacky SF technology taken for granted in these tales: more significant are the priorities of global

¹ William Gibson, *Pattern Recognition*, Putnam, NY 2003.

² Bruce Sterling, *A Good Old-Fashioned Future*, NY 1999.

cyberpunk, in which technological speculation and fantasy of the old Toffler sort takes second place to the more historically original literary vocation of a mapping of the new geopolitical Imaginary.

Paperback seismographs

This is why such Hunter-Thompsonian global tourism has real epistemological value: cyberpunk constitutes a kind of laboratory experiment in which the geographic-cultural light spectrum and bandwidths of the new system are registered. It is a literature of the stereotypes thrown up by a system in full expansion, which, like the explosion of a nova, sends out a variety of uncharted signals and signs of nascent communities and new and artificially differentiated ethnies. Stereotypes are pre-eminently the vehicle through which we relate to other collectivities; no one has ever confronted another grouping without their mediation. They are allegorical cartoons that no longer convey the racist contempt of the older imperialism and which can often (as Žižek has observed of the ethnic jokes popular in the old Yugoslavia) function as affectionate forms of inclusion and of solidarity.

Indeed, an inspection of this literature already provides a first crude inventory of the new world system: the immense role—and manifest in Gibson's evocations, all the way down to *Pattern Recognition* itself—of Japan as the monitory semiotic combination of First-World science-and-technology with a properly Third-World population explosion. Russia now also looms large, but above all in the form of its various Mafias (from all the former Republics), which remind us of the anarchy and violent crime, as well as of the conspiratorial networks and jobless futures, that lurk just beneath the surface of capitalism. It also offers the more contemporary drama of the breakneck deterioration of a country that had already reached parity with the First World. Europe's image ambiguity—a kind of elegant museum or tourist playground which is also an evolutionary and economic dead end—is instructive; and the absence of Islam is a welcome relief, in a moment in which it is reality, rather than culture or literature, that is acting on the basis of that particular stereotype.

This new geopolitical material marks a significant historical difference between these commercial adventure stories and the equally cynical gonzo journalism of an earlier period; indeed, the affinities and

distinctions between the cultural products of the 60s and 70s and those of the 90s and 00s would be well worth exploring further. Equally significant is that these protagonists—busy as they are in locating rare products, securing secret new inventions, outsmarting rivals and trading with the natives—do not particularly need the stimulus of drugs (still a preponderant, one may even say a metaphysical, presence in so recent a world-historical expression as David Foster Wallace's 1996 *Infinite Jest*).

eBay imaginary

But it is by way of its style that we can best measure the new literature on some kind of time-continuum; and here we may finally return to the distinctiveness of *Pattern Recognition*, where this style has reached a kind of classical perfection. I will define it as a kind of hyped-up name-dropping, and the description of the clothes selected by the protagonist (Cayce Pollard) for her first day in London is a reliable indicator:

a fresh Fruit T-Shirt, her black Buzz Rickson's MA-1, anonymous black skirt from a Tulsa thrift, the black leggings she'd worn for Pilates, black Harajuku schoolgirl shoes. Her purse-analog is an envelope of black East German laminate, purchased on eBay—if not actual Stasi-issue then well in the ballpark.

I have no idea whether all these items actually exist but eBay is certainly the right word for our current collective unconscious, and it is clear that the references 'work', whether or not you know that the product is real or has been made up by Gibson. What is also clear is that the names being dropped are brand names, whose very dynamic conveys both instant obsolescence and the global provenance and neo-exoticism of the world market today in time and space.

A further point is that, little by little, in the current universe, everything is slowly being named; nor does this have anything to do with the older Aristotelian universals in which the idea of a chair subsumes all its individual manifestations. Here the 'high-backed workstation chair' is almost of a different species to the seat in the BA 747 'that makes her think of a little boat, a coracle of Mexcel and teak-finish laminate'. But there are also exercise chairs, called or named 'reformers': 'a very long, very low, vaguely ominous and Weimar-looking piece of spring-loaded furniture', which can also be translated into another language, where it becomes 'a faux-classical Japanese interpretation in black-lacquered

wood, upholstered with something that looks like shark-skin'. Each of these items is on its way to the ultimate destination of a name of its own, but not the kind we are familiar with when we speak of a 'Mies chair' or a 'Barcelona chair'. Not the origin, but rather the named image is at stake, so that an 'Andy Warhol electric chair' might be a better reference.

In this postmodern nominalism, however, the name must also express the new, and fashion: what is worn-out, old-fashioned, is only useful as a cultural marker: 'empty chrome stools of the soda-fountain spin-around kind, but very low, fronting on an equally low bar', where it is the 'low', the 'very low' that connotes Japan. And in Moscow the table 'flanked by two enormous, empty wingback armchairs' only stands for backwardness. This is probably why Gibson's Russian episode is less interesting: he brings a residual Cold War mentality to this built space, 'as though everything was designed by someone who'd been looking at a picture of a Western hotel room from the eighties, but without ever having seen even one example of the original'. Current Soviet and Central European nostalgia art (*Ostalgie* in German) is far more vibrant and exciting than this, reflecting on an alternate universe in which a complete set of mass-produced industrial products, from toilet seats to window panes, from shower heads to automobiles, had been invented from scratch, altogether different from the actually existing Western inventory. It is as though the Aztecs had beaten Cortéz and survived to invent their own Aztec radio and television, power-vehicles, film genres and popular culture.

At any rate, the premise here is that Russia has nothing new to offer us in this field (the Sterling aesthetic offers much better chances of appreciating what is genuinely new, world-historically innovative, in Eastern nostalgia art); and the conclusion to be drawn is that name-dropping is also a matter of knowledge, and an encyclopaedic familiarity with the fashions of world space as those flow back into the boutiques or flea markets of the West. What I have called name-dropping is therefore also to be grasped as in-group style: the brand names function as a wink of familiarity to the reader in the know. Even the cynicism (taking the word in Sloterdijk's, rather than in its post-Watergate sense) is a joyous badge of group adherence, the snicker as a form of hearty laughter, class status as a matter of knowing the score rather than of having money and power. In-group style was, I believe, the invention—or better still, the discovery—of Thomas Pynchon, as early as *V* (1963), even though

Ian Fleming deserves a reference ('Thank you, Commander Bond', murmurs Cayce, as she pastes a hair across the outside apartment door). But just as we no longer need drugs, so we no longer need Pynchon's staples of paranoia and conspiracy to wrap it all up for us, since global capitalism is there to do it more efficiently; or so we are told.

Birth of an aesthetic?

Nonetheless, *The Crying of Lot 49* remains a fundamental paradigm and, as with Hunter Thompson, the differences are historically very instructive indeed. For the post-horns and the other tell-tale graffiti have here been replaced by something like a 'work of art': the clues point, not to some unimaginable reality in the social world, but to an (as yet) unimaginable aesthetic. It is a question of an unidentified film of some kind which has come to be known, among insiders, as 'the footage', and which shows up in stills and clips in the most unlikely places (billboards, television ads, magazines, the internet), in 'one hundred and thirty-four previously discovered fragments . . . endlessly collated, broken down, reassembled, by whole armies of the most fanatical investigators'. Indeed, as one might expect, a whole new in-group has formed around the mysteries of the footage; we are experiencing, one of the characters observes, the 'birth of a new subculture'. A worldwide confraternity comes into being, committed to this new object and passionately exchanging and arguing contradictory theories about it. The footage thus makes *Pattern Recognition* over into something like Bloch's conception of the novel of the artist, which carries the unknown unrealized work of art inside itself like a black hole, a future indeterminacy suddenly shimmering in the present, the absent Utopian sublime suddenly opening up like a wormhole within the empty everyday:

Light and shadow. Lovers' cheekbones in the prelude to embrace.
Cayce shivers.

So long now, and they have not been seen to touch.

Around them the absolute blackness is alleviated by texture. Concrete?

They are dressed as they have always been dressed, in clothing Cayce has posted on extensively, fascinated by its timelessness, something she knows and understands. The difficulty of that. Hairstyles too.

He might be a sailor, stepping onto a submarine in 1914, or a jazz musician entering a club in 1957. There is a lack of evidence, an absence of stylistic cues, that Cayce understands to be utterly masterful. His black coat is usually read as leather, though it might be dull vinyl, or rubber. He has a way of wearing its collar up.

The girl wears a longer coat, equally dark but seemingly of fabric, its shoulder-padding the subject of hundreds of posts. The architecture of padding in a woman's coat should yield possible periods, particular decades, but there has been no agreement, only controversy.

She is hatless, which has been taken either as the clearest of signs that this is not a period piece, or simply as an indication that she is a free spirit, untrammelled even by the most basic conventions of her day. Her hair has been the subject of similar scrutiny, but nothing has ever been definitively agreed upon.

The problem, for the group forming around this artifact, as indeed for all group formation, is that of the contradiction between universality—in this case the universality of taste as such—and the particularity of this unique value that sets us off from all the others and defines us in our collective specificity. A political sect (as we now seem to call these things) wishes simultaneously to affirm the universal relevance of its strategy and its ultimate aims, and at one and the same time to keep them for itself, to exclude the outsiders and the late-comers and those who can be suspected of insufficient commitment, passion and belief. The deeper anxiety of the practitioners of the footage website and chatroom is, in other words, simply that it will go public: that CNN will get wind of this interesting development; that the footage, or the completed film, the identified and reconstructed work of art, will become, as they say, the patrimony of mankind, or in other words just another commodity. As it turns out, this fear is only too justified, but I omit the details, as I hate people who tell you the ending; except to express my mixed feeling that Pynchon's solution was perhaps the better one, namely to break off *Lot 49* on the threshold of the revelation to come, as Oedipa is on the point of entering the auction room.

After all this, it may come as something of a surprise to learn that the footage is not the central issue of this novel, even though it supplies the narrative framework. Yet it ought already to have been clear that there is a striking and dramatic contradiction between the style, as we have described it, and the footage itself, whose 'absence of stylistic cues' suggests a veritable Barthesian 'white writing'. Indeed, it is rather this very contradiction which is the deeper subject of *Pattern Recognition*, which projects the Utopian anticipation of a new art premised on 'semiotic neutrality', and on the systematic effacement of names, dates, fashions and history itself, within a context irremediably corrupted by all those

things. The name-dropping, in-group language of the novel thus reveals in everything the footage seeks to neutralize: the work becomes a kind of quicksand, miring us ever more deeply in what we struggle to escape. Yet this is not merely an abstract interpretation, nor even an aesthetic; it is also the existential reality of the protagonist herself, and the source of the 'gift' that informs her profession.

Commodity bulimia

Cayce Pollard's talent, lying as it does halfway between telepathy and old-fashioned aesthetic sensibility, is in fact what suspends Gibson's novel between Science Fiction and realism and lends it its extraordinary resonance. To put it simply (as she does), Cayce's business is to 'hunt "cool"'; or in other words, to wander through the masses of now and future consumers, through the youth crowds, the 'Children's Crusade' that jams Camden High Street on weekends, the teeming multitudes of Roppongi and Shinjuku, the big-city agglomerations of every description all over the world, in order mentally to detect the first stirrings of anything likely to become a trend or a new fashion. She has in fact racked up some impressive achievements, of which my favourite, mildly redolent of DeLillo, is the identification of the first person in the world to wear a baseball cap backwards (he is a Mexican). But these 'futures' are very much a business proposition, and Cayce is something like an industrial spy of times to come. 'I consult on design . . . Manufacturers use me to keep track of street fashion'; these modest formulas are a little too dry, and underplay the sheer physicality of this gift, which allows her to identify a 'pattern' and then to 'point a commodifier at it'.

There is here, no doubt, something of the specialized training of the authenticator of paintings and the collector of antique furniture; but its uncanny temporal direction condemns Cayce irredeemably, and despite her systematically black and styleless outfit, to the larger category of fortune-tellers and soothsayers—and occasionally puts her in real physical danger. This new *métier* thus draws our world insensibly into some Science Fictional future one, at least on the borders, where details fail to coincide. The job of one character is to start rumours; to drop the names of products and cultural items enthusiastically in bars and nightclubs, in order to set in motion what would in Pynchon have been a conspiracy, but here is just another fad or craze.

But Cayce's gift is drawn back into our real (or realistic) world by the body itself; she must pay for it by the nauseas and anxiety attacks, the commodity bulimia which is the inevitable price of her premonitory sensibility—no doubt nourished by obscure traumas, of which the latest is her father's mysterious disappearance in Manhattan on the morning of 9/11. It is as if the other face of the 'coming attraction', its reification and the dead-end product of what was once an active process of consumption and desire itself, were none other than the logo. The mediation between these two extremes of *energeia* and *ergon*, of process and product, lies no doubt in the name itself. I have argued that in the commercial nominalism of the postmodern, everything unique and interesting tends towards the proper name. Indeed, within the brand name the whole contradictory dialectic of universality and particularity is played out as a tug of war between visual recognition and what we may call the work of consumption (as Freud spoke of the work of mourning). And yet, to paraphrase Empson, the name remains, the name remains and kills; and the logo into which the brand name gradually hardens soaks up its toxicity and retains the poison.

Cayce's whole body is a resonator for these omnipresent logos, which are nonetheless louder and more oppressive in certain spaces (and places) than in others. To search for an unusual item in Harvey Nichols, for instance, is a peculiarly perilous activity:

Down here, next to a display of Tommy Hilfiger, it's all started to go sideways on her, the trademark thing. Less warning aura than usual. Some people ingest a single peanut and their head swells like a basketball. When it happens to Cayce, it's her psyche. Tommy Hilfiger does it every time, though she'd thought she was safe now. They said he'd peaked, in New York. Like Benetton, the name would be around, but the real poison, for her, would have been drawn. . . . This stuff is simulacra of simulacra of simulacra. A diluted tincture of Ralph Lauren, who had himself diluted the glory days of Brooks Brothers, who themselves had stepped on the product of Jermyn Street and Savile Row, flavouring their ready-to-wear with liberal lashings of polo knit and regimental stripes. But Tommy surely is the null point, the black hole. There must be some Tommy Hilfiger event horizon, beyond which it is impossible to be more derivative, more removed from the source, more devoid of soul.

These nauseas are part of Cayce's navigational apparatus, and they stretch back to some of the oldest logos still extant, such as her worst nightmare, Bibendum, the Michelin Man, which is like that crack

through which the Lacanian Real makes its catastrophic appearance. 'National icons', on the other hand, 'are always neutral for her, with the exception of Nazi Germany's . . . a scary excess of design talent'.

Now it is a little easier to see the deeper meaning of the footage for Cayce: its utter lack of style is an ontological relief, like black-and-white film after the conventional orgies of bad technicolour, like the silence of solitude for the telepath whose mind is jammed with noisy voices all day long. The footage is an epoch of rest, an escape from the noisy commodities themselves, which turn out, as Marx always thought they would, to be living entities preying on the humans who have to coexist with them. Unlike the footage, however, Gibson's novel gives us homeopathy rather than antidote.

It does not seem anticlimactic to return to the future and to everything also auto-referential about this novel, whose main character's name is homonymous with that of the central figure in *Neuromancer*. Indeed, the gender change suggests all kinds of other stereotypical shifts of register, from active to passive for example (from male hacker to female future-shopper). Is it possible, however, that Cayce's premonitions of future novelty can also stand as the allegory of some emergent 'new Gibson novel'? *Pattern Recognition* does seem to constitute a kind of pattern recognition for Gibson, as indeed for Science Fiction generally.

TOM NAIRN

A MYRIAD BYZANTIUMS

CULTURAL STUDIES HAVE come strongly into their own in this, the first age of really existing internationalism. Nowadays, the latter features regularly in tuxedo and bow tie at Rotary Club dinners and Mayoral receptions, with a standard guest-card reading 'globalization'; and on such occasions the opening grace, keynote addresses and concluding prayers are still economic in tone. But we should not be over-impressed by this liturgical language, and cultural studies can provide a perspective that brings one down to earth about the process. Internationalism was once saintliness, sandals and dewy-eyed propriety. Then, after 1989, the real thing suddenly disembarked, complete with democratic crotchets, contradictions and resentments—and attendant culture clashes. Naturally, the discipline has been driven towards the closest encounter with this appalling and exhilarating reality. One side effect has been a mounting preoccupation with 'identity', as discussed in Lutz Niethammer's recent essay, 'The Infancy of Tarzan'.¹ So many millions are now compelled to re-identify themselves, amid new mountains of documentation, that the basics of this process are being forced into more open scrutiny. Identity used to be a favoured playground for epistemology and psychology, even for metaphysics. For growing masses of people, however, issues of identity are not metaphorical but treasured, if deplorable, bits of cheap plastic: matters of everyday life and death.²

New guidebooks are needed on the darkling plain. *On Not Speaking Chinese*, which appeared last year, is a probing and analytical narrative account of the rites of two-way passage, whose inspiration derives mainly from the work of Stuart Hall; it is written from the angle of a non-Chinese-speaking Chinese woman who ended up in Australia, via Indonesia and the Netherlands.³ Her complicated story from the global periphery encounters Niethammer's, from what used to be the centre; vital motifs are common to them both.

'Deep is the well of the past', Thomas Mann's narrator declares at the start of *Joseph and His Brothers*. Quite how deep, how confusing and how inescapable, forms an essential part of the substance of his great tale. The brothers find themselves re-living the past, but invariably in ways that nobody, in that forgotten time, could possibly have predicted. The ghosts are startling rebirths, not mere repetitions: history 'ends' all the time, in other words, but can only do so by bewildering and novel re-starts. The well between the lines of *On Not Speaking Chinese* reaches back into those recesses, and illustrates what has become of them, from Dutch Southeast Asia to the Atlantic and back again, via a detour involving Africa, the West Indies and the British Empire. In such trajectories, continents shrink and centuries appear fleeting; the reader gets a vivid sense of how long Ang's hybrid coat of many colours has been in the making. Its formation was possible only by the confluence of innumerable tributaries into the present day's single stream: what appears as the destiny of 'globalization'. In the latter's immense delta of migration and interchange, she argues, cross-fertilization and mergers must come into their own. Conurbations like Sydney, Los Angeles, Melbourne, London or Vancouver are, for the moment, like the end-*Heimat* of humanity's tale—the forges of post-national culture.

Appearances of the dread prefix, 'post', are frequently ominous, auguring re-writes of Dante's inscription: abandon not just the past but everything intelligible, ye that enter here. So it is important to stress that Ang steers resolutely away from the style of spiritual surfing that postmodernism made fashionable. Instead, her own personal story is recounted as the basis of an embryonic global theory, with a consistently sharp eye for the ridiculous and the endearing. The Ang family were forced out of Indonesia at the time of the massacres of the sixties, and sought a homeland in the Netherlands rather than China. Ien's father made them switch from Indonesian to Dutch. Ernest Gellner used to enjoy telling a similar story. Some time in the early 1930s, his father called together the German-speaking Bohemian-Jewish family and instructed them: 'No more German in this household! I want to hear only Czech from now

¹ NLR 19, Jan–Feb 2003. See also *Kollektive Identität: Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 2000.

² For an illuminating recent survey see Jane Caplan and John Torpey, eds, *Documenting Individual Identity: the Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, Princeton 2001.

³ Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, Sydney and London 2002.

on.' In both cases the children obeyed, with astounding literary results that no bourgeois paterfamilias could have predicted.

Now a fully-fledged cultural-studies intellectual, the author returned after twenty years to the Southern Hemisphere, and the more Asia-oriented Australia of Paul Keating's Labour governments. But soon her third homeland was to be shaken by a tide of aggressive nationalist reaction—Pauline Hanson's One Nation movement, directed against the new immigration and its accompanying multiculturalism. This defiant reassertion of native, in the sense of British, or 'white-Australian', identity against the new Asian and Chinese multiculturalism, abruptly threatened everything for which Ang had migrated.

At state level, Hansonism suffered a fate like that of Powellism in Britain. These were populist agitations from outside the core political system, flaring briefly and then swiftly recuperated and damped down by the mainstream parties. The latter acted against immigration in both cases, but in more discreet or roundabout ways, combining increased restriction with a loudly proclaimed ideology of anti-racism. And in both cases, such tactics were staged retreats before trends that were to prove irrevocable. The old polity strove to regain control of the migratory processes, but could do little to reduce or turn them back. In Ang's sense, a more profound mutation of modern society was under way: it gathered pace in the period of the later Cold War, then burst through and over the lowered barriers of the Free Trade world. Already coursing strongly across crumbling and damaged *levées*, the tributaries began to merge into the estuarial tide-flow towards hybridity.

Conservatives of both Left and Right have tended to agree that there is little really new about globalization. The former perceive only enhanced threats from an authoritarian capitalism always imperially inclined, and the latter see merely the latest phase of an economic expansion synonymous with modernity. Both deny the novelty of a conjuncture that has put together the disappearance of state socialism's development alternative, the information revolution, unprecedented migration, an all-round cession of nation-state sovereignty, and the formulation of the human genome. In fact, etymology is surely not at fault here: 'globalization' is no fad, but a new term reflecting, however inadequately, a great mutation comparable to the one that generated 'nationalism' from the 1870s onwards.

Nor has the new effaced the old. Ang's humour is at its blackest in considering the mighty nationalist resurgence through which, since the nineties, a reborn Middle Kingdom has sought to mobilize its diaspora, in Sydney and almost everywhere else. Once, de-Sinicized Chinese had been treated as cast-offs; now they are summoned, in the name of the greatest culture in history, and expected to speak Chinese again. (For English readers, the clarion-call may be appreciated at www.huaren.org—*huaren* meaning 'Chinese people'.) Although created in Vancouver and California, this site rallies all sons and daughters of the race 'home', culturally speaking, and pours obloquy upon all who persecute the Chinese or insult their Republic. By implication it is, of course, also warning them against the perils of hybridity. Particular animosity is displayed towards Ang's start-up homeland, Indonesia. But London readers need not yet be too alarmed. When I last looked it up, the UK contribution was brief and relatively harmless: a somewhat toothless ad for the forthcoming *Chinese Who's Who in Britain*.

Ape and essence

For Ang, the point of 'not speaking Chinese' had been to emancipate herself from unchosen ethno-linguistic ties: she was tired of being corporeally Chinese yet never 'really' so, without the language. Ethno-linguistic nationalism is a dogma intolerant of aberration: 'blood' equals 'race' equals 'tongue' equals 'culture' equals 'civilization', and all boxes must be ticked in the prescribed order. Metaphorical blood—the sort that is thicker than water—also figures in Lutz Niethammer's analysis. In a recent Walt Disney version of the Edgar Rice Burroughs saga, the human foundling, rejected as alien by some of the gorillas, is reassured by his ape foster mother that 'we are identical' as she holds him close, with eyes shut, to feel their two hearts beating together. Differentiated in reality by hundreds of millennia of natural selection, they choose to believe they are as one: thus—on the basis of 'selective perception and emotion'—is 'collective identity constructed and lived out'.

Ang's rejection of imposed ethnicity is more subtle, but acerbic none the less. Tongue is not, as Romantics have always insisted, the 'soul' of a culture or civilization. This was never more than the shorthand metaphysics of ideological ethnicity. The weapon readiest at hand for national or community resistance was indeed often language; but even weak generalizations of the trope have always led to nonsense—Irishmen

speak but are clearly not English, Austrians are not pretend-Germans, Canadians are more than half-Americans, Cypriots long ago ceased to be just extensions of Greekness and so on. It is simply untrue that one 'has to' speak Welsh to be Welsh, or understand Chinese to be a Chinese person. In the recent Iraq War, Anglophony was perceived by some commentators as the key bond among the coalition warriors.⁴ They failed to ask why, in that case, New Zealanders and Canadians (Anglos as well as *Québécois*) remained so obdurately hostile. The reason, surely, was that they speak a different *political* language from the early-modern *Ursprache* that remains inescapable in Washington, London and Canberra. Diametrically opposed meanings resonate from near-identical phonemes in the same historical tongue.

Any particular language is a carnal, living vehicle, whose most vital function is to express and grasp emotions. From this basis it traverses and re-traverses the societal terrain we now call 'identity'—the spider-web of enablement which produces individual and community simultaneously. Extractable ideas are only a small part of it. The same grammatical rules and phonemes may find widely different concrete meanings, over contrasting (even antagonistic) social landscapes. But it remains a 'vehicle' none the less, albeit one of formidable compass and depth. That is, it is not a *Geist*: it does not possess or define either the individual or the community—whatever commands are being issued from the political or ideological stage. One *can* switch from one tongue to another. Not an easy thing to do, granted—in computer terms, more like switching operating systems than changing programmes. But Ang has done so twice over, and she knows intimately how, in the end, the gains and losses will roughly make up for one another.

Some acceptance of language-contingency goes together with globalization. Any given cosmopolis will need a lingua franca; but no one vehicle is better than another for that. Internet English may have it for the moment; but no-one should think it will 'take over the world'. As Gellner maintained convincingly in *Nations and Nationalism*, modern social circumstances do require a common means of transport, especially in formative periods. However, getting on to one or other omnibus is not really offering up one's soul, as ethno-nationalists imagine. Tongue-essentialism is a mystique rooted in an earlier phase of nation-building—in the nostalgic 'heartlands' of Hanson's Queensland, Iain

⁴ See Amitav Ghosh, 'The Anglophone Empire', *New Yorker*, 7 April 2003.

Duncan Smith's shire England, or Le Pen's *vieille France*. Its social correlate was 'assimilation', the sustained stage-musical cherished by traditional imagined communities. Monocultural hallmarking was essentially a byproduct of ethnic nationalism—the powerful identification-mode prevalent from the 1870s to (almost) the present.

Multiculturalism is the transitional way-station towards civic communities of the future. Assorted immigrant communities have first of all to stand up for themselves, by insisting on equal status and maintaining inherited speech and customs. But as Ang acutely observes, these claims tend to be limited in both effect and duration. They are really rites of onward passage, and succumb all too quickly to conservatism, as older generations struggle to keep youngsters within the limits of tradition. Not infrequently, they also move to close ranks against newer immigrant arrivals—sensing that their own pact with the devil could be put at risk by too many new threats. In the UK these reservations have recently been voiced by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown in her pamphlet *After Multiculturalism*.⁵ Ang prefers the formula of 'hybridity'—the acceptance of irrevocable mixture as starting point, rather than as a problem.

However, the question then inevitably presents itself: starting point to what? Stephen Castles and Mark Miller began their exhaustive study *The Age of Migration* by suggesting that what is distinctive about recent years is 'the global scope of movements, their centrality to domestic and international politics, and their enormous economic and social consequences. Migration processes may become so entrenched and resistant to governmental control that *new political forms will emerge*'.⁶ Part of the answer is surely hinted at in this prospect. Although more durable than multiculturalism, hybridity itself will also be a way-station. It rests upon the certainty of irrevocable kinship mixture and ongoing cohabitational fusion. But in the longer run, it surely entails that politics, rather than culture *per se*, must determine the end product. For all its subtlety and imaginative life, *On Not Speaking Chinese* remains encamped within Cultural Studies. Ang shows that this can prove an admirable diagnostic tool; but at a certain point, the subject matter itself overflows her subject-area boundaries, rather as diaspora has overcome ethno-national statehood.

⁵ Foreign Policy Centre, London 2000.

⁶ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Basingstoke 1993, 2nd ed. 1998.

Nomadic identities were never in any case purely cultural formations. They have been formed by states, as well as by languages and cultures—yet these rarely surface in Ang's argument. The deeply militarist contours of the Indonesian state which occasioned her original transplantation; the Chinese fossil-Communism still striving to reproduce itself through patriotic appeals to a previously ignored diaspora; the consociational anomaly of the Dutch Kingdom that first welcomed and then alienated her; the weird *bricolage* of Australian Federalism (an atrophied replicant of Westminster) which she has finally chosen as home—this gallery of political wonders tends to be neglected in her discourse. So the prophet of hybridity finds it difficult to attach any political profile to her forecast. In the conclusion, 'Together-in-Difference', she stresses the ambivalence and ambiguity still clinging to the ascendant hybrid culture. The latter may know where it's coming from, and that there's no going back; but whither is it bound?

Something of the same stalemate lies at the conclusion of Niethammer's account. He rightly downplays Fukuyama's and Huntington's views as 'extrapolations from the knowledge of those who wield power in America'. The best they can do is little different from Nietzsche's version of culturalism: an 'animality at play' that (in effect) abandons the serious world, the political or state universe, to George W. Bush and the resurgent men in uniforms. 'Perhaps we should for once put the magical formulas of identity aside, and risk a less distorted look at everything that wears a human face', he concludes; in this way, we might discern 'the possible forms of our sociability'.

Civic nationalism

'Sociability' is surely not quite the word. Would it not be more accurate to say 'sociality', with the sense of 'societal nature'? But as soon as this term is used, an ancient door starts to creak open again: the history of 'history' itself, and its origins in human nature. After the halls of mirrors and smoke machines that Niethammer dismisses as 'collective identity', it is insufficient to end by appealing to just 'a human face'—for this, surely, can only be 'a human nature'; and presumably he does not mean a *tabula rasa* on to which culture writes everything. Do we not then confront the inevitability of a common or universal 'identity'?

Intellectuals have a particularly exaggerated fear of being 'determined', or pre-arranged by fate. 'Essentialism' is seen as a submission to inheritance, or a detraction from the freedom to construct any different or alternative future. *Social* constructivism, by contrast, is almost a rule of procedure—virtually the 'soul' of acceptable meaning in this area of historical and sociological speculation, and hence to be defended at any cost against the dark retrospectives of evolutionary or anthropological constraint. The 'human face' and originary social forms of pre-Antiquity must be classed as preceding all the conscious dilemmas of the present day, rather than as still informing or haunting them.

Except that they *do*, of course, as Niethammer's final sentence concedes. Nor is it by chance that they are doing so today with renewed pressure, a kind of urgency; and generating such a notable quantity of new research and argument. The conditions of globalization demand, precisely, a more universal retrospect, as a precondition of efforts to imagine Ang's more common, human future within the ocean of time that lies beyond the delta. Hybridity implies the transcendence of 'ethnicity' in the sense that so deeply scored eighteenth- to twentieth-century modernization. And it is this forward motion itself that demands better insight into antecedents: the runic 'dream-time' from which everything conscious and potentially 'free' must have emerged.⁷

The goal of human-nature investigation in this sense is not of course to deny or undermine free will and self-direction: it is to understand better what these are—the features of what has been called human 'ultra-sociality'. In their development of arguments originally advanced by Darwin in *The Descent of Man*, Peter Richerson and Robert Boyd point out how human sociality 'is based on quite different principles than the ultrasociality of any other species', such as insects: 'It arose by adding a cultural system of inheritance to a genetic one that normally supports small-scale societies based on kinship and reciprocity'. The larger-scale societies this made possible tend to be 'explicitly defined and marked by symbolic boundaries. Some of these marks are relatively simple badges

⁷ 'I adventure into the past; hence my eagerness, hence my fear and pallor. But eagerness has the upper hand, and I do not deny that it is of the flesh, for its theme is the first and last of all our questioning and speaking and all our necessity; the future of man. That it is which we shall seek out in the underworld and death . . . to find out where it lies and is, in the past. For it is, always is, however much we say It was' Mann, *Joseph and His Brothers*, London 1999, p. 33.

such as body ornamentation and dialects. Others are complex ritual systems accompanied by elaborately rationalized ideologies.⁸

In her chapter 'Together-in-Difference' Ang zeroes in effectively on the word these changes are carrying us away from: 'ethnicity'. It is 'the reification of ethnicity, and therefore of identitarian essentialism and closure' that has done most of the damage. However, it is again important here to keep some history in mind. Supposedly designating all that is inherited and humanly inescapable, the 'ethnic' has occupied popular discourse so decisively only since the sixties.⁹ From the outset it has underwritten *difference* as decisive: that is, not whatever it is that all human *ethnies* have in common, but what each specific heritage may have that supposedly demarcates it from others. But there was always an underground queering of the pitch at work in this argument. Of course all peoples are peculiar, just as all languages are concretely different. Nobody is just 'human' (apart from religious icons), and no-one speaks an undefiled essence of 'language' (apart from mystics, who are probably pretending). However, as I noted earlier, it does not follow that 'human' and 'communication' are negligible abstractions—left-overs, too vacant or too remote to count for practical purposes.

Since Noam Chomsky's work on deep grammar, the situation has changed for linguistics. But human social nature, Niethammer's 'sociability', is

⁸ Richerson and Boyd, 'The Evolution of Human Ultrasociality', in Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt and Frank Salter, eds, *Indoctrinability, Ideology and Warfare: Evolutionary Perspectives*, Oxford and New York 1998. For a summary of recent polemics in this field, see Chapter 1 of Robin Dunbar, Chris Knight and Camilla Power, eds, *The Evolution of Culture: an Interdisciplinary View*, New Jersey 1999. Knight's previous book, *Blood Relations*, New Haven, CT 1991, sought to revise Engels's *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, with much greater emphasis on gender than social class.

⁹ See the first 'Introduction' to *Ethnicity: a Reader*, edited and introduced by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, Oxford 1996, pp. 3–14. First recorded in the OED in 1953, the popular term is in fact Americo-centric, and should be linked with Niethammer's verdict on Fukuyama and Huntington, cited earlier. It became common discourse only after the abrupt decline of the informal black-white racism that had at once structured and delimited us identity from the Civil War onwards. This terminological shift reflected both the new neo-imperial hegemony (which made racism deeply embarrassing) and the mass arrival of Hispanic-American immigrants (who made it impossible in the old guise). Such big changes created a need for a more effective all-American nationalism: a dilemma of irresolution, tending towards centrifugal dispersion. No answer was found until the feverish *redressement* following the twin-tower attacks of 2001—a dolorous bid at the redemption of times and attitudes irretrievably lost.

surely unlikely to harbour only this one structural capacity, or propensity. One would expect it to have other *a priori* well-springs in heritable store, derived from the same prolonged aeons of natural selection. It may be harder to work out what these are, as squads of social anthropologists are now trying to do. However, being confined to half-educated guesses need not prevent theorists from acknowledging that the 'human face' must have some distinguishable features, common to all *ethnies*.

City states?

One way back towards these origins may be to recall how, a millennium ago, there was a single 'world-city': the metropolis of Byzantium. It was the fabulous centre of the mediaeval world, a real equivalent to the mythic city-state of Saint-John Perse's *Anabasis*.¹⁰ Its colossal size, wealth and variegation were unique at a time when Rome had shrunk back to a Papal market town, and London and Paris were biggish villages. But in the broadening delta of the present, scores of such mega-cities either exist or are in formation. The global countryside has decided to move to town, which means someone else's city, capacious enough for more huddled masses, and with green-field room for indefinite farther expansion. Earlier migrating tides—like those from nineteenth-century Europe—often sought a superior and more egalitarian rurality, better farms and small towns they could call their own. Their ideal was whatever could be appropriated as 'virgin', or ready for a 'countryside' to be made. Some even then ended up as city-dwellers; but nowadays they all do. The sole destination possible has become *cosmopolis*—and hence, following Ang's analysis through, the condition of a longer-range hybridity that is bound to transcend assimilation and multiculturalism alike.

Thus London, for example, has undergone the mutation from staid Anglo-capital into *cosmopolis* within a single generation. It is this process,

¹⁰ 'Trace the roads whereon the folk of all races take their departure, showing the heel's yellow colour: the princes, the ministers, the captains with tonsillar voices; those who have done great things, and those who see this or that in a vision . . . There lies the way of the world and I have nothing to say of it but good—Foundation of the City. Stone and bronze. Thorn fires at dawn bared these great stones, green and viscid as the foundations of temples, of latrines; and the mariner at sea, reached by our smoke, saw that the earth to the summit had changed its form . . . Thus was the City founded and placed in the morning under the labials of a clear sounding name.' Saint-John Perse, *Anabase* (1924), trans. T. S. Eliot as *Anabasis*, London 1959; translation slightly modified.

more than anything else, that has altered the country's whole centre of gravity, and thoroughly undermined its archaic gentry-constitution. Successive governments have been running out of excuses for failing to undertake drastic political reform. Margaret Thatcher herself did nothing, since she thought economics alone mattered. Tony Blair shuffled into a less than half-hearted devolution, then trod water, then panicked, before trying uselessly to regain the shore. As I write, he appears to be drowning.

The economist *Zeitgeist* of the 1990s was partly responsible for such political absurdities. The whole world took seriously their penny-whistle choruses about state nationalism 'fading away', but did not worry equally seriously about what might be taking its place. Yet social nature also seems to abhor a vacuum, and the boundary-loss world of the nineties was bound to seek some compensation. Neoliberalism was of course founded on the tunnel-vision conviction that nothing whatever would be required to take its place. *Homo economicus* had only to step forth, as in a dream of revelation: the assembled spotless egos of One Market Under God, gabbling pidgin-American. After just a decade of hegemony, this occlusion of politics and culture bore history into the twin-tower atrocity, the re-ignition of American nationalism, and the Iraq war. Castles and Miller were surely more intuitively right. New (and particular) '*political forms*' will be what emerge, and these can now hardly avoid being fuelled by Ang's hybridity. The latter is much more than academic animality at play. In her depiction, it is more like an as-yet laconic signpost to deep-current sea-changes; a societal equivalent of global warming.

In an essay on Claude Lévi-Strauss, Clifford Geertz pointed out how in earlier periods the seals of ethnic diversity were more easily kept intact:

When so-called primitive cultures were only very marginally involved with one another—referring to themselves as 'The True Ones', 'The Good Ones' or just 'The Human Beings', and dismissing those across the river or over the ridge as 'earth monkeys' or 'louse eggs' . . . cultural integrity was readily maintained.²²

²² 'The Uses of Diversity' [1985], in Geertz, *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*, Princeton 2000. Lévi-Strauss had got into hot water with UNESCO for suggesting that the 'all-the-sameism' he had helped it adopt in the 1950s was now out of date, and that (by 1971) more recognition should be accorded to ethnic differences.

Now things are more complicated. Not multiculturalism alone, but normal inter-nation relations call for something more exalted than louse eggs. Ethnic nationalism was the nineteenth- and twentieth-century compromise. It sanctioned a somewhat strained *égalité* of ethnocentricities: all monkeys are really as good as one another (or as awful as one another), but each is also allowed to continue subscribing to its own superiority, within its own drawing room. The louse eggs were for deployment only in times of warfare, or by the frankly uncouth. Regrettably, this meant 'most of the time'. In 2003, Bush's Mesopotamian war has fostered an earth-monkey stench of awesome intensity.

Such devices may have once served a developmental purpose; but they have become foundering hulks in the post-1989 delta. Geertz puts the point in terms of visual art: we were accustomed to dwelling in framed landscapes and still-lives, but now have to inhabit 'panoramas and collages', extending from almost any urban neighbourhood, via the evening tv news, into 'ill-defined expanses, social spaces whose edges are unfixed, irregular and difficult to locate . . . That the world is coming, at each of its local points, to look more like a Kuwaiti bazaar than like an English gentleman's club, is shatteringly clear'. Navigating a way through a collage calls for new skills and 'strengthening the powers of our imaginations to grasp what is in front of us'—formulae with which Ang and Niethammer would be unlikely to disagree.

I would suggest that 'hybridity' is most likely to become a conduit for aggressive (and in the long run, probably highly litigious) 'civic nationalism'. The mildly exasperating nature of the term is probably due to the fact that its contemporary usage was first coined mainly as a counterpoint to 'ethnic nationalism', and usually signified 'ethnocentrism-plus': peoples do need to belong and cohere, but also to locate themselves via principles and some shared cultural signposts. However, the priority still awarded to inherent and discrete traits ('blood') indicated the theory's own location, as a defensive response to ethnicity's vision of human nature. 'Civic' in that context then tended to become a counter-metaphor, meaning head rather than heart—the extrinsic or the abstract, contrasted with Niethammer's fabular example of hearts beating instinctively as one.

In the world of intensifying hybridity, however, 'civic' is reverting to something like its originary sense: 'cities', or to do with cities. And for that, another term might be appropriate, something like new or

'neo-civic'. 'Ethnic', by contrast, has already slipped into something like 'post-ethnic': the world everyone has lost, or will soon lose—that is, rurality, the retreating landscape of peasant or pre-peasant origins, and of cultural transmission by heartbeat and habituation. Nostalgia was a vital cement of that ethno-national world. It made the motifs of kinship appear 'immemorial', by fusing them into the formation of modern states. Hybridity is unlikely to forsake such an enduring feature of sociality; but it will certainly have to redefine it.

The vast new mega-cities cannot avoid dominating their hinterlands, whether these are pensioned-off nations such as 'England' or merely rural 'regions'. Yet such hegemony cannot, for obvious reasons, assume ethnic forms. Old nation-states (and their conurbations) could embody supposedly ethnic majority rule; but today's successors to Byzantium are sustainable without that kind of dependence. They may choose, but they no longer rely upon, rustic or small-town sustenance—or upon the conscript armies and ex-peasant police forces that nations permanently in arms used to demand.

This is why the retreat of 'ethnicity' is altering the centre of gravity, and producing a salience of the civic and the democratic—not because liberal democracy and its civic identity are more worthy, but because there is no alternative: mega-city hybridity can breathe no other air. Two other preconditions are needed, admittedly: a steeply falling birth-rate and a rapid growth in literacy. But as Emmanuel Todd has underlined in *Après l'empire*, these are already largely in place, or soon will be.¹² Indeed, they partly explain the migratory movements and effects that have taken place. They were preconditions of the long shift towards democracy from the sixties onwards. Here, Mayor Ken Livingstone's defeat of Her Majesty's Labour Party (New) in London was a genuine augury, even if he himself has subsequently gone weak at the knees about it. Nation-state territorial parties have become a bit like 'ethnicity' itself: on the slide but refusing to go quietly, especially on the subjective level.

¹² See Todd, *Après l'empire*, Paris 2002. The subtitle—*essai sur la décomposition du système américain*—is worthy of note. The decomposition to which Todd refers is that of the primitive global system left by the abrupt end of the Cold War, upon which the anachronistic *us* state has come to depend. His argument is that this system was undermined by longer-term, deeper developmental currents representing authentic global (or 'globalizing') movement, against which America then had to defend itself by an armed restoration of the *status quo ante*.

Beyond London, the disintegration of Great Britain as a whole can indeed be viewed quite coherently with the same bias. Officially if nervously, 'devolution' was granted in 1998 to two textbook ethno-nations, Wales and Scotland. In fact, limited political power was being bestowed upon the Glasgow-Edinburgh and South Wales conurbations, the 'city-states' in or around which most of the Welsh and Scots live.⁵ Even more cautiously, self-government was doled out to Northern Ireland by the Peace Process—but, in that case, to a dominant city in steep economic decline, and still riven by the ethnic hatreds of previous generations. The largest part of the former multinational kingdom, England, has not so far reacted against both London dominance and devolution with 'English nationalism'. It was only ethnicity-fixation that demanded the latter arise from slumber when called. So far it appears to be snoring more loudly than before. Could that be because it stands no chance without London? Which has already opted convincingly for 'hybridity'? The most salient observable change—a big one—has been demands for equivalent powers from its largest and geographically most remote conurbation, that of the north-eastern river-valley cities.

The cosmopolitans

Within the delta, cosmopolitanism is no longer a precarious abstraction, or (*pace* Ang) an endangered species that requires rescuing. Nor is it really an ethical posture, as ex- or anti-nationalist intellectuals so often claim—an elective moral stance, which thinking persons are encouraged to slip on like a new overcoat. Be a cosmopolitan today, and see your uncouthness disappear (or be forgiven). In reality, cosmopolitans are idiosyncratic individuals, who, amongst other things, write books like *On Not Speaking Chinese*. They show attitude, in other words, and possess idiosyncrasies matching or exceeding those of any known national identity. While there have always been quite a few around, we know that millions more are on their way. Ang happens to come from somewhere between Surabaya, Amsterdam and Sydney, and the sub-title of her book is 'Living Between Asia and the West'. But all are from some land of 'between', and destined to end up as citizens—not constitutional

⁵ One of the leaders of the Scottish struggle against the state-surrender of 1707 was Andrew Fletcher. The Laird of Saltoun's vision was of a British Isles comparable to the seventeenth-century Netherlands, a loose confederation of autonomous city-states. By a piquant historical coincidence, the new Scottish parliament is at present arising on the former Saltoun family lands at Holyrood, in Edinburgh.

abstractions, that is, but members of one neo-Byzantine *civis* or another. In this emerging context, 'cosmopolitans' are nomads from assorted elsewheres, become citizens of a particular polis, but naturally take the 'wider world'—'globalization'; 'post'-this-and-that—for *granted*. This is why 'civic nationhood' will become less an item of political philosophy, and more like the specific fate prescribed by city-plus-hinterland countries. As yet, however, we have only piecemeal intimations of how such reinvented nationality politics may work—though enough to see they will be utterly distinct from the rural-national idylls of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In my experience cosmopolitans are intellectually curious, critical, fashion-conscious, and often enough 'lateral' or experimental in their thinking. Derided by nationalists as 'rootless', they tend to be rather family-oriented. Scepticism about the prescribed metaphorical family of the landing-place—'France', 'America', or whichever—is often compensated for by over-indulgence of the real one. This kinship nexus is normally distributed over several continents, yet invariably treated (in several languages, or out-of-date *argots*) as if everyone still dwelt in adjoining streets. The information revolution—email, above all—gave cosmopolitans a huge boost. Having grown up with the 'abolition of distance', they tend to be communication addicts to an even greater extent than the rest of us (which may help explain their distinction in Cultural Studies). Once élite cadres almost by definition, cosmopolitans have become as bourgeois or as proletarian (not, of course, as *rustic*) as anybody else. In short, they were born for both globalization and hybridity.

But to reiterate: cosmopolitanism is not the same thing. One should not confuse actual social mutation with the fog-machines of ideological yearning. It must also be observed that one great danger of cosmopolitical living is not yet extinct. This amounts to a lot more than the dominant-male (or 'nationalist') ethos evoked in Niethammer's fable of the apes. It is the standing temptation to *outdo the ethnic*, by becoming, for example, more British than the Brits, or more gushing over twilight's last gleaming than the average us ('Caucasian') homelander. Recent and ongoing history offers grotesque illustrations of the latter, on which there is no need to dwell farther. The point is that less-rooted incomers have a big advantage here: their very distance provides them with better understanding, as well as with a stronger sense of cultural and political

opportunity. Alas, renegades from hybridity still make the worst (and most plausible) ethno-nationalists; but probably not for much longer.

Hybrid sociality

My personal recollections of Tarzan, King of the Apes, go back farther than the Walt Disney version Niethammer refers to. He loomed large in early 1940s Scotland, where I was one of thousands of under-agers that practically lived for the next Tarzan movie. Swimming champ Johnny Weissmuller played the part in those days, with Maureen O'Sullivan as his mate. There were (still are) other Tarzans of course; but, just as many have never got over Sean Connery ceasing to be James Bond, some of us would later be inconsolable when Weissmuller became too tubby for the role.

The rules of last century dictated accompaniment by an adult for ten-year-olds, which in turn meant desperate stratagems of first-night persuasion, especially in a middle-class household where stuff like that was held to be rather vulgar. Eventually in sheer (apparent) exasperation my schoolmaster father gave in, and I was grumblingly taken to the pictures. It must have been in 1940 or 41. On the way down the long hill towards the Alhambra Picture Palace, Dunfermline, I was virtually apologising to him for having such primitive tastes, when he suddenly said (lowering his voice conspiratorially): 'No, no . . . actually I don't mind Tarzan films . . . *I quite like them*'. Here was an epiphany far more blinding than the movie itself. In fact, it was quite like the common heartbeat Niethammer recalls in his essay: we became as one—and however many disappointments still lay in store, it wasn't just delusion either. However, words and culture were the vehicle, not the resonance of 'blood'.

Looking up the filmography, I see the film must have been *Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939), the one where the couple acquired 'Boy' after a plane crash in the jungle, thus completing their family. Much as I enjoyed sitting through it in the company of another human being, the whole matter of human-ape relations did worry me a bit. Politico-social correctness was not involved: I simply could never work out how it would ever be possible to set up such an ideal family situation, without the chain of unlikely accidents Edgar Rice Burroughs so deftly leaves in place. It was not as if a Dunfermline lad could just go out to jungle-land and *explain* to the apes and other fauna what he wanted. The enabling

'ultra-sociality' of communicative culture was lacking; had it not been, I think we would all have run away, and tried to get on the next boat.

Niethammer seems to believe that 'collective identities' are perilous inventions, like fireworks. Someone is always getting blown up by them, in the name of a show not worth the sacrifice, and in someone else's interest. But this may be because international mentality has become over-wedded to the ideology of ethnicism: 'peoples', distinct and bounded by reputedly inherent characteristics, manifest in tongue, culture and in society's substitute for 'instincts'. But looking back from really existing internationalism and its correlate, 'hybridity', it is at least clearer what this prestidigitation consisted in. Displays of the originary were necessitated by a defence—or, often, by the aggressive advance—of political boundaries. Hybridity has shown how ethnicity was, in reality, largely shifting sand. But civic-political boundaries, ancient or new, are not. Folk-song, dialects and dance come and go, readily imitable, and also exchangeable; by contrast, expressions of a common will or agency, and their institutional manifestations, are much closer to being the iron of human history.⁴ These enduring templates have proved readily communicable across generations, centuries; even millennia. In Pierre Bourdieu's terms, the general form of the human 'habitus'—togetherness obtainable solely through 'diversity'—may be more resistant than its passing contents.

If in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries 'nation' proved more durable than 'class', this must have been for structural, rather than conjunctural reasons alone. Such an outcome was never realistically ascribable only to élite conspiracies, betrayals and failures of moral will. And the same factors probably mean that it is new political and state forms that will compel a staggered transition from the ethno-national identity scene (the fixed views and daguerreotypes) to Geertz's and Ang's 'collages' of hybrid societies. However, these factors cannot be themselves all

⁴ One of the most influential anthropological essays of recent times makes a similar point: Fredrik Barth's famous 'Introduction' to Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, London 1969. Barth argued that the boundary itself is often much more important than the 'cultural stuff' found on either side of it. Though of course based on pre-existing *differentiae*, these markers then add a new and constitutive dimension, enabling the sacral formation of 'the True Ones', 'Human Beings', etc. Particular ethnic borders are malleable or shifting; 'boundary-ness' (or ethnocentricity) is not; it eventually becomes the cultivation of 'diversity' that marks the move towards globalization.

'chosen', as the post-colonial or postmodern spirit would prefer. The elective capacity itself must rest, surely, upon certain *a priori*s, whose visage (as Niethammer says) is just what we need to understand better. To do this entails admitting that not *all* 'identities' can be equivalently porous, dubious, dissembling, collapsing and discardable. At the very least, some must be a good deal more fixed or durable than others. 'Ethnicity' (c. 1953–c. 2001) may have been predominantly *papier-mâché*; it should not be assumed that the same is true of civic-political nationality, especially in the post-Cold War, literate, gender-equalizing and hybrid-informed society forecast by Ang and others.

Pre-history and anthropology to one side, there is also a strong high-cultural argument for some of these perspectives. Basing himself primarily on Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and the Animals*, Ian McEwan has argued that great literary texts have always implied limitations to the 'Standard Social Science Model'. Darwin's life, as well as his theories of biological origin, led him to recognize the common traits since theorized as structural grammar and 'ultrasociality':

That which binds us, our common nature, is what literature has always, knowingly and helplessly, given voice to. And it is this universality which science, now entering another of its exhilarating moments, is set to explore.¹⁵

The 'well of the past' may be as deep as Mann's opening invocation suggests; but, short of natural catastrophe, that of the human future will be deeper still, and it defies imaginative belief to conclude that globalization must dilute it down into a quarter-inch-deep trickle of uniformity, or homogeneity. This is the stuff of dystopias, rather than of actual, contested development and change. The latter is far better conveyed by a later chapter of *Joseph and His Brothers*, the one where Jacob at last decides to show his favourite son something of what will one day be his. He goes to a bolted trunk at the back of his tent, and rummages about among the woolly things, skirts, head-cloths and smocks, to find 'Rachel's *ketonet passim*', a garment bought from some pilgrim and 'supposed to have belonged to a king's daughter in times past'.

¹⁵ Lecture at Trinity College, Cambridge, 2001; an extract was published as 'The Great Odyssey: Literature, Science and Human Nature', *Guardian*, 9 June 2001. Donald Brown's *Human Universals*, New York 1991, is a more systematic exposé of the same argument.

When he fishes out the dusty relic, it turns out to be a revelation: the incredible collage of creation itself—

The metal embroideries glittered in the lamplight. The flashing silver and gold blotted out at times the quieter colours as the old man held it up in his unsteady arms: the purple, white, olive-green, rose-colour, and black of the emblems and images, the stars, doves, trees, gods, angels, men and beasts, lustrous against the bluish mist of the background.

Joseph tries on the many-coloured coat and manages, effortlessly, to 'look like a young god', to the chagrin of his brothers.¹⁶ I suspect something like this is the real point hovering over both Niethammer's essay and Ang's book. Both suggest how perfectly absurd it is (now as then) to think that the powers which generated this wonder will, because of farther mingling and migrations still to come, somehow lose their potency, and become unable to produce still greater marvels in future time.

¹⁶ The contemporary theorist who has taken this idea seriously is Roberto Mangabeira Unger. See for example his *Boutwood Lectures*, Cambridge 2002, obtainable from www.law.harvard.edu/unger. The 'ascent of humanity to more god-like status', as he describes it in Lecture 1, leads him on to the following 'untimely remark' in Lecture 2: 'The solution that converges with the interests of democracy and practical progress is to replace fantastical or willed difference (i.e. ethnic demarcation) with the ability to create real difference. To strengthen this capacity is one of the purposes of a democratizing and experimentalist alternative. Such an alternative can help turn the national difference into a product of moral specialization within humanity. This turn expresses the truths that the roots of a human being lie in the future more than in the past and that under democracy, prophecy speaks louder than memory'.

REVIEWS

Ran Edelist, *Ehud Barak U'Milhamto Be'Shedim* [Ehud Barak: Fighting the Demons]

Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Yedioth Ahronoth and Chemed Publishing Houses: Tel Aviv 2003, NIS 98, 504 pp

BARUCH KIMMERLING

FROM BARAK TO THE ROAD MAP

About a year ago, the *New York Review of Books* devoted its pages to an interesting exchange on the question of who was to blame for the collapse of the Camp David peace talks between Barak and Arafat, presided over by Clinton. This was—and still is—not a purely historical issue: what happened at Camp David has a direct bearing on the present and future of Israeli–Palestinian relations. The exchange in the *NYRB*, however—on one side, an interview with Barak by the Israeli historian, Benny Morris; on the other, a ‘Reply to Ehud Barak’ by Robert Malley and Hussein Agha—was principally concerned, above all on the Barak–Morris side, with clearing one or other of the participants in the aborted talks of responsibility for their failure. In doing so, the debate became decontextualized, avoiding wider discussion of what really went wrong and why, and concentrating instead on the interpersonal dynamics that developed at Camp David and the psychologies of the major players. The tragic outcome of the June 2000 negotiations was the widespread Western and Israeli acceptance of Barak’s declaration that his ‘most generous offer’ was rejected due to mysterious reasons of Arafat’s—the ultimate proof that Israel has ‘no partners’ among the Palestinians for peace-making. This fateful ‘conclusion’ helped trigger the Palestinian uprising of September 2000; and the combination of Barak’s assertion with the intensification of Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians within the Green Line resulted in the collapse of the Israeli peace camp and Ariel Sharon’s two landslide electoral victories.

In the course of that dreadful aftermath, and especially following Deborah Sontag's 'revisionist' descriptions of the Camp David summit, set out in the *New York Times* in July 2001, and Malley and Agha's initial *NYRB* piece in August 2001, 'A Tragedy of Errors', Barak—a politician aspiring to a comeback: if Sharon could, it seems anything is possible—clearly felt that he owed something to the Israeli people and the world at large. To that end, he recruited a noted historian and chose, with the *New York Review*, the most respectable of American forums in which to construct his face-saving version of the story. That scholars of such calibre can so easily be employed to further the public-relations aims of politicians is deeply regrettable; but the Barak-Morris piece was certainly effective. Prior to the Camp David talks, Barak and Clinton had agreed that every move would be coordinated in advance between the United States and Israel; and that if the summit failed, Israel would not take the blame. Clinton stood by this, as did most of his subordinates. The exception was Malley, the President's Special Assistant for Arab-Israeli Affairs during the negotiations, who came out with his own, fairly devastating account of Barak's strategy, and apportioned blame for the failure between all three sides. Nevertheless, with the support of both Morris and Dennis Ross, Clinton's point-man for dealing with the Palestinians (employed today as director of a hawkish, pro-Israeli research institute), and through numerous personal articles and appearances, Barak has succeeded in convincing most of the American public of the validity of his 'no partner' claim.

Still more important for Barak, however, was to explain himself before the annals of Israeli history. For this purpose he recruited the services of Ran Edelist, a well-known journalist specializing in military-intelligence stories, whose 500-hundred-page tome recounts the story of Barak's brief tenure, from his assumption of office in July 1999 to his ouster in February 2001. *Fighting the Demons* is virtually a daily chronicle of these months, closely following the Prime Minister's appointments diary, detailing his conversations—significant and otherwise—and innumerable trips abroad. It is also replete with philosophical and historiographic monologues, and the not-so-very-deep insights of Barak the man. Nevertheless, it is a more interesting document than might have been expected, or intended. Although most of the book was apparently penned in close collaboration with Barak, something clearly changed during the writing process. A careful reader will detect that, at a certain point, Edelist's path diverges from his hero's. Despite Barak's regular interjections, and without ever quite admitting it, the work offers an interpretation closer to that of Malley and Sontag—or of other critical accounts, such as Yossi Beilin's 1999 *Touching Peace*, or even that of Barak's close aide, Gilad Sheer, in his 2001 *Just Beyond Reach*—than to the Barak-Morris narrative.

Edelist does not scant the 'problematic' aspects of Barak's character: his personal insensitivities, chronic suspicion, bullying, hierarchical approach

and difficulties with working in a team or consulting advisors are, in any case, already well known to the Israeli public. Edelist's contribution, however, is to explain that all Barak's weaknesses are compensated by his exceptional gifts: dazzling intelligence, personal integrity, strategic understanding, global outlook, physical courage and resilience. Also praised are his resolute defence of the national interest over any merely personal or party concerns, precision skills (clock-repairing is a hobby), musical talent (piano), grasp of nuance and ability to take tough decisions after meticulously weighing the costs. In short: a national and, indeed, world leader of a stature that Israel has not seen since David Ben-Gurion. The only contemporary comparison—though Barak has criticisms even of him—is Clinton. A man of such qualities, Edelist declares at the outset of his book, did not stand a chance. Barak failed not because of his flaws but because of his sterling strengths. The Israeli people were not mature enough for such a leader.

Fighting the Demons is full of carefully chosen biographical nuggets—especially emphasized is a humiliating childhood on the Mishmar Hasharon kibbutz, which impelled Barak to become the most successful child of all—but, despite its pretensions, the book comes nowhere near real biography. Born in 1942, Barak was drafted into the army at the age of seventeen and worked his way up through a succession of elite units, command and General Staff positions. Deputy Commander of the Israeli invasion force in Lebanon in 1982, promoted Head of the Military Intelligence Branch the following year and Chief of Staff in 1991, Barak's career has also been marked by his personal participation in various brutal death-squad activities, selectively surveyed by Edelist. In the 1973 'Operation Springtime of Youth' Barak, dressed as a woman, led a raid on a PLO group in Beirut, implicated in the 1972 Munich Olympics murder of Israeli athletes; the attack killed the head of Fatah's intelligence as well as his wife, who tried to shield him. In 1988, according to the *New York Times*, Barak circled overhead in a Boeing 707 as Israeli commandos assassinated Arafat's deputy, Abu Jihad, in Tunis, in front of his wife and children; though this has always been denied by the Israeli government and Edelist makes no mention of the event. Barak was also responsible for ordering the advance during the 1982 Lebanon War into the ambush at Sultan Yaacub—covered up by the military until 1994, and absent from Edelist's book—as well as for the 'training accident' at the Tzeelim base in the Negev Desert in 1991, involving a rehearsal for a landing in Iraq in order to liquidate Saddam Hussein. A missile landed among a group of soldiers, killing five and wounding seven others. Barak is accused of having scrambled into his helicopter before any of the wounded could be evacuated and fleeing to Tel Aviv. Under Yitzhak Rabin he served as Minister of the Interior from July to November 1995, and Minister of Foreign Affairs from then until June 1996.

Nevertheless, after the Netanyahu years Barak's election as prime minister in 1999 kindled real hope among certain sectors of the Israeli population and profound anxieties among others—chiefly the Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories and the ultra-Orthodox, alarmed by his campaign promises to 'separate religion from politics' and institute conscription among *yeshiva* students. His victory was warmly welcomed among Israeli Arabs (more than 90 per cent of whom voted for him), Palestinians, leaders of the Arab states—in particular, Mubarak in Egypt and Abdullah II in Jordan—and the rest of what is known as the Western world.

Barak, however, had an agenda and priorities of his own. It is true that he faced difficulties in tying together left and right blocs in the Knesset; but it is doubtful that this was the reason he established a government that included the chauvinistic National Religious, Yisrael B'Aliyah and Shas parties, alongside the centre-left Meretz. 'I am closer to Yitzhak Levy [of the NRP] than to Yossi Sarid [of Meretz],' Barak declared. He would have preferred to form a government with Likud, headed by Sharon, for whom he entertained a great admiration following their joint military endeavours. From the outset, the support of the 'Jewish parliamentary majority' was more important to him than that of Israeli Arabs; though he acknowledged the latter's distress and pledged to strive for their 'full equality', this would only be sought after a final settlement with the Palestinians had been agreed. The essence of Barak's approach, however, as distinct from Rabin's, was demonstrated by his decision to freeze implementation of all interim agreements with the Palestinians arising from the Oslo-Wye accords—among them a partial redeployment of Israeli troops on the West Bank; Palestinian control over three villages near Jerusalem; the release of pre-1993 prisoners—in favour of a comprehensive, permanent-status settlement. (The only exception was the opening of a main road in Hebron, after considerable delay.)

Instead, Barak chose to make agreement with Syria his first priority. There were two reasons for this: firstly, such an accord looked relatively simple, compared to the emotionally loaded negotiations with the Palestinians; less explicitly, Barak foresaw that isolating the Palestinian leadership in this way might force them to agree to sign on to a final settlement on his terms. When the Shepherdstown talks with Syria foundered over a few metres of land along the water's edge, due for demilitarization in any case—Barak's hesitation here probably caused by anxiety over Syrian access to the Kinneret Lake, Israel's main water reservoir—Barak decided to withdraw from Lebanon without an agreement, despite the opposition of his chiefs of staff: the sole accomplishment of his premiership. It was only then, in the summer of 2000, when the end of Clinton's tenure (and, in retrospect, his own) was drawing near, that Barak finally found time to hold talks with the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian leadership had been begging for concessions—especially the release of prisoners, the most painful issue for their people—to ease the pressure on it from below. On the one hand, the PA was expected to behave ‘like Ben-Gurion in the Altalena affair’, ordering an Etzel underground weapon ship to be sunk in 1948; a command that caused uproar among the Jewish population. On the other, it was unable to provide its people with any sign of success. The Intelligence Services warned of a weakening of the PA’s control and a strengthening of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad; Barak insisted that there would be no release of prisoners ‘with blood on their hands’ or territorial ‘concessions’ until a final status agreement had been reached. Before he was elected, Barak once said that he understood the Palestinians; that if he were one of them, he would join a terrorist organization. This, of course, immediately caused an uproar and Barak was forced to insist that he had been misconstrued, his remarks taken out of context, and so on. After reading Edelist’s book, one can believe him. He does not have, and has never had, any ability to empathize either with his adversaries or with his friends. This is without doubt one of the reasons for the failure of his negotiations with both Assad and Arafat and for his poor relations with fellow Israeli politicians, including members of his own party.

For by the summer of 2000, the seeds of mutual mistrust between Arafat and Barak had already been sown. Though the central negotiations conducted at Camp David were preceded by innumerable talks at all levels, these were unproductive. Arafat was opposed *a priori* to Barak’s approach—a freeze on the third, more extensive troop withdrawal and other previous Israeli commitments, and transition to talks on the conditions for a final comprehensive settlement—and still had nothing to display to an increasingly restive Palestinian populace as fruit of the Oslo accords. Yet because all the cards were in Israel’s hands, Arafat had no alternative but to agree to take part in Camp David.

The Israeli proposal, as transmitted to Clinton, was quite detailed. On territory, the Palestinians were to be offered 80:20—that is, 80 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip would be under the control and sovereignty of the Palestinian state; 20 per cent would be annexed to Israel, including seven settlement blocs which comprised around 80 per cent of the Jewish settler population; a viaduct would be built to link the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Earlier, the possibility of Israel holding a long-term lease on an additional 10 per cent of the West Bank along the Jordan Valley, ‘for security reasons’, had also been discussed. Later it would be argued that keeping the river under Israeli control was important mainly for Jordan, anxious about Palestinian irredentism and the possible unification of the two banks. The right of return would be recognized only with respect to the Palestinian state; while Israel would help in the rehabilitation of the

refugees, it would not acknowledge any moral or legal responsibility for the creation of the problem. The municipal boundaries of Jerusalem would be expanded—apparently to include the annexation of Abu Dis, Azariya and a few other villages—so there would, nominally, be something to share. The intention was to leave most of the current area of the city under Israeli sovereignty; the additional territory would be sold to the Palestinians as their 'Jerusalem'. A bypass road would then be paved around East Jerusalem to allow worshippers to reach the holy shrine of *Haram al-Sharif*, the Islamic 'Noble Sanctuary' and Jewish Temple Mount.

It should be recalled that the Palestinians, from their perspective, had already made the ultimate concession, and thus were without bargaining chips. In the Oslo agreements, they had recognized Israel's right to exist in 78 per cent of historical Palestine in the hope that, following the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan—and on the basis of the Arab interpretation of UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338, which call for withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967—they might recover the remainder, with minor border adjustments. Yet—although later there was a certain slackening of Israeli demands—talk continued concerning annexation of another 12 per cent or so of the West Bank in order to create three settlement blocs, thus dividing the Palestinian state into separate cantons, with the connexions between them very problematic. The Palestinians called the portions allotted to them *ban-tustans*; but the original enclaves created by the Afrikaners for South African blacks were far better endowed than those of Barak's 'generous' proposal.

Is it any wonder, then, that Arafat, who was aware of the coordinated American-Israeli position, was brought unwillingly to the summit? Even Edelstein's book indirectly supports Sontag's argument, that 'the Palestinians felt that they were being dragged to the verdant hills of Maryland to be put under joint pressure by an Israeli prime minister and an American president who, because of their separate political timetables and concerns about their legacies, had a personal sense of urgency.' The Palestinians said they had been repeatedly told by the Americans that the Israeli leader's coalition was unstable; after a while, they said, the goal of the summit meeting seemed to be as much about rescuing Mr Barak as about making peace. These were the reasons that most of the Palestinian delegation decided in advance to adopt a futile 'bunker strategy' of automatically refusing any proposal.

Arafat's suspicions were confirmed when the short-fused Clinton launched a crude attack on him, impugning his honour. On another occasion, when the delegations got swept up into an argument over whether the remains of the Temple were indeed buried beneath the Al-Aqsa Mosque, it was the Protestant Clinton who gave a sermon on Solomon's Holy Temple according to the Bible. One of the president's Jewish aides intervened to save the embarrassing situation, commenting that this was the President's

personal opinion and did not reflect the official position of the United States. In his account of the Camp David meetings, Barak's Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami has remarked that this episode reflects the extent to which Arafat was a prisoner of his own myths; what the incident really shows is the extent to which each side was sunk in myths of its own. This is apparently the chief reason why the talks ultimately fell apart over the status of the Temple Mount, despite the fact that the Palestinians had already agreed to a division of the city and Israeli sovereignty over the Western Wall, in exchange for control over the rest of the area of the mosque and the Arab neighbourhoods.

During the course of the talks Barak did indeed agree to be 'flexible' about the Israeli proposals on the various issues, and was close to a territorial concession of over 92 per cent. But each proposal, and each issue, was discussed individually, and it was stressed that, until everything had been agreed upon, nothing was agreed. Thus the Palestinians were made discrete offers in many different areas, mainly out of the certainty that all would be rejected outright regardless, while the Palestinians—or so it was reported at the time—did not make any counter-proposals. Afterward, Barak could group together all the separate instances and claim that he had made an incomparably generous offer to the Palestinians.

When the summit failed, and with the remnants of his government now coming to pieces, Barak made his fateful declaration that there was 'no partner' on the Palestinian side. Clinton—also out of a decidedly personal interest—was true to his promise and backed him up. There were further so-called 'non-talks' and 'non-papers' in Taba where, according to some sources, the parties came closer to agreement than ever before. As far as Barak and Arafat were concerned, however, the game at Camp David was over. From that episode to armed conflict was just a question of time.

After seven years of futile talks that had failed to make any significant advance in the Palestinian cause—accompanied by the intensification of the Jewish colonization process in the Occupied Palestinian Territories—the question was not whether but when the anger and violence would erupt, and in what form. The Palestinians were not entirely unaware of the asymmetry in the power relations with Israel, but they changed the paradigm. From an attempt to end the occupation and achieve independence that relied upon diplomatic efforts and depended on the kindness of the Jews and Americans, they moved on to a 'war for independence', fuelled in part by religious emotions; the type of struggle in which the people are prepared to pay a high personal and collective price in order to achieve what they see as a paramount objective.

In this respect, Sharon's provocative visit to the Temple Mount in 2000 was only the match that ignited the stores of fuel that Peres, Netanyahu and Barak

had each amassed in turn. Barak had paved the way for Sharon's victory in February 2001 with an unprecedented 52 per cent of the vote—a shift historically reinforced by the general election of January 2003, in which the right-wing bloc secured 69 out of 120 Knesset seats, and Sharon became the first Israeli Prime Minister to win a second term since Menachem Begin in 1981.

Under Sharon, Israel has become a state oriented towards one major goal: the politicide of the Palestinian people. Politicide is a process whose ultimate aim is to destroy a certain people's prospects—indeed, their very will—for legitimate self-determination and sovereignty over land they consider their homeland. It is, in fact, a reversal of the process suggested by Woodrow Wilson at the end of the First World War and since then accepted as a standard international principle. Politicide includes a mixture of martial, political, social and psychological measures. The most commonly used techniques in this process are expropriation of lands and their colonization; restrictions on spatial mobility (curfews, closures, roadblocks); murder; localized massacres; mass detentions; division, or elimination, of leaders and elite groups; hindrance of regular education and schooling; physical destruction of public institutions and infrastructure, private homes and property; starvation; social and political isolation; re-education; and partial or, if feasible, complete ethnic cleansing, although this may not occur as a single dramatic action. The aim of most of these practices is to make life so unbearable that the greatest possible majority of the rival population, especially its elite and middle classes, will leave the area 'voluntarily'. Typically, all such actions are taken in the name of law and order; a key aim is to achieve the power to define one's own side as the law enforcers, and the other as criminals and terrorists. An alternative goal may be the establishment of a puppet regime—like those of the *bantustans*—that is completely obedient but provides an illusion of self-determination to the oppressed ethnic or racial community.

The hard facts are, however, that a Palestinian people exists, and the possibility of its politicide—or its being ethnically cleansed from the country—without fatal consequences for Israel, is nil. On the other hand, Israel is not only an established presence in the region but also, in local terms, a military, economic and technological superpower. Like many other immigrant-settler societies it was born in sin, on the ruins of another culture that had suffered politicide and partial ethnic cleansing—although the Zionist state did not succeed in annihilating the rival indigenous culture, as many other immigrant-settler societies have done. In 1948 it lacked the power to do so, and the strength of post-colonial sentiment at the time made such actions less internationally acceptable. Unlike the outcome in Algeria, Zambia or South Africa, however, the Palestinians were unable to overthrow their colonizers. The Jewish state in the Middle East succeeded in proving

its viability, developing its own vital society and culture. Its long-term development and internal normalcy depend, however, on its recognition as a legitimate entity by the other peoples of the region. The peace accord signed with Egypt was, in this sense, Zionism's second biggest victory. Its biggest was the Oslo agreement, in which the Zionist movement's primary victim and adversary recognized the right of a Jewish state to exist in Palestine. Just as Sadat's treaty with Begin was a delayed result of Israeli victory in the 1967 and 1973 wars, this revolutionary change in mainstream Palestinian political thought occurred in the aftermath of American victory in the Gulf War of 1991.

Similarly, it was in the run-up to its invasion of Iraq that the Bush Administration issued its new 'Road Map'. Its goal is to close down all armed resistance to Israel in exchange for the establishment, within temporary borders, of an entity described as a 'Palestinian state' by the end of 2003. This is to be followed by the withdrawal of Israeli forces from PA territories and elections for a new Palestinian Council, leading to negotiations with Israel on a permanent agreement, to be reached by 2005. The so-called 'Quartet' of the US, EU, UN and Russia is supposed to supervise implementation of the plan, which leaves all the matters in dispute—borders, refugees, status of Jerusalem, among others—open. This strategy fits well with Sharon's tactic of buying time to continue his politicide policy—a tactic that rests on the assumption that Palestinian terrorist attacks will continue, drawing forth a correspondingly savage Israeli military response.

The effectiveness of Sharon's approach was attested by a public opinion poll conducted in early December 2002. More than seven out of ten Palestinians and Israelis indicated that they were ready to undertake a settlement process based on the Palestinians refraining from violence and the Israelis agreeing to a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. Fewer than one in five Palestinians and Israelis (in both cases the percentages were remarkably similar) were committed to the idea of regaining historical Palestine or holding on to the Occupied Territories. However, a large proportion of both the Palestinian and Israeli majorities expressed no confidence in the readiness of the other side to give up violence or make the necessary concessions. Thus the bulk of Palestinians continued to support the use of violent methods in the Intifada, while a similar proportion of Israelis continued to favour a violent crackdown by the IDF.

Being an able map-reader, Sharon has found the new Bush plan very convenient. Speaking in November 2002, he outlined a clear vision of how the conflict should be managed: with the implementation of the Road Map, Israel would be able to create a contiguous area of territory in the West Bank which, through a combination of tunnels and bridges, would allow Palestinians to travel from Jenin to Hebron without passing through any

Israeli roadblocks or checkpoints. Israel would undertake measures such as 'creating territorial continuity between Palestinian population centres'—that is, withdrawing from cities such as Jenin, Nablus and Hebron—as long as the Palestinians remain engaged in making a 'sincere and real effort to stop terror'. Then, after the required reforms in the Palestinian Authority had been completed, the next phase of the Bush plan would come into effect: the establishment of a Palestinian state, within 'provisional' borders.

The intention is obvious. The 'Palestinian state' will be formed by three enclaves around the cities of Jenin, Nablus, and Hebron, lacking territorial contiguity. The plan to connect the enclaves with tunnels and bridges means that a strong Israeli presence will exist in most other areas of the West Bank. To drive the point home, Sharon added:

This Palestinian state will be completely demilitarized. It will be allowed to maintain lightly armed police and internal forces to ensure civil order. Israel will continue to control all movement in and out of the Palestinian state, will command its airspace, and not allow it to form alliances with Israel's enemies.

Sharon knows very well that it would be virtually impossible for a Palestinian leader to end the conflict in exchange for such limited sovereignty and territory. However, the very mention of the code words 'Palestinian state'—taboo in the right-wing lexicon—endows him with an image of moderation abroad and positions him at the centre of the domestic political spectrum. Such gestures also win him an almost unlimited amount of time to continue his programme of politicide, which throughout has received the unconditional support of Ehud Barak.

In the aftermath of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq—and the glaring failure to find any weapons of mass destruction—Washington is now attempting to burnish its image as a peacemaker by pushing the Road Map again. But while Western media attention has been taken up with the *hudna*, or truce agreement, by the leaders of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Palestinian Authority, few remarked on the precise wording of Israel's 26 May 2003 statement regarding its 'adoption' of the plan, which declared: 'the Government of Israel resolves that all of Israel's comments, as addressed in the [Bush] Administration's statement, will be implemented in full during the implementation phase of the Road Map.' In other words, it was not the map itself that was accepted but the fourteen conditions and reservations, each quite separate from the content of the original document. This allows Sharon to say that he has adopted his own version of the Road Map and gives Bush the chance to issue a statement about a 'positive step' and come to Aqaba for a photo opportunity.

The Israeli conditions, however, are based on an incorrect perception of the causality and logic of the conflict—the presumption that the root of the

violence lies in 'Palestinian terrorism', rather than in Israel's generation-long occupation and illegal colonization of Palestinian lands and its exploitation and harassment of the entire people. Thus the initial Israeli 'condition' states that: 'In the first phase of the plan and as a condition for progress to the second phase, the Palestinians will complete the dismantling of terrorist organizations . . . and their infrastructure, collect all illegal weapons and transfer them to a third party'. Were the document's framers to adopt a more accurate perspective on the historical and political causalities, they would propose the prompt termination of occupation, and withdrawal of Israeli military forces to the pre-1967 borders as the first—and not the last—phase of the process. Under such conditions, it would then make sense to demand that the sovereign Palestinian state cease its resistance against a non-existent occupation and act, gradually but forcefully, against terrorist organizations that might endanger its own authority or stability.

One of the main flaws of the Oslo accords was the assumption that the Palestinian Authority would be a subcontractor regime, working to maintain Israel's security, while all other issues would be subject to endless rounds of negotiations with every concession depending on Israeli generosity. This approach proved futile. In addition, the collapse of the Oslo process showed that the long period of 'trust building' caused mainly mutual distrust and offered plenty of opportunities for internal projectionist forces to sabotage any agreements. A minimal requirement of a realistic peace plan is to give the Palestinians some possibility of achieving one of their major aims: a sovereign state over 22 per cent of historic Palestine. An explicit statement of this goal could create a greater symmetry among the parties and provide incentives for settling all the additional issues such as Jerusalem, refugees, the division of water resources and so on. Finally, the Road Map includes two contradictory demands on the Palestinians, as preconditions for a settlement: on the one hand, they are to establish an authoritarian regime to fight dissident terror organizations; on the other they are to democratize their polity. Again, the understanding of the causality at stake needs to be reversed, if this is not to be simply a hypocritical pretext for avoiding any agreement—for a settlement itself, with popular backing, might be the best means to accelerate the democratization of all the parties involved. Without, at the very least, such adaptations as these, the Road Map merely points the way to the continued politicide of the Palestinian people under the umbrella of a Pax Americana.

The author's Hebrew-language review of *Fighting the Demons* appeared in *Ha'aretz* in April 2003.

Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet and the Enlightenment*

Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA 2000, \$19.95, paperback
352 pp, 0 674 00489 2

JACOB STEVENS

ARTIFICIAL TWINS?

Have Condorcet's impassioned calls for equal rights and social peace, written shortly before his death in a prison cell, and Adam Smith's vigorous denunciations of feudal oppression, been unjustly neglected by modern readers? Arguing that recent generations have overlooked key aspects of the Scottish and French Enlightenment, Emma Rothschild's *Economic Sentiments* aims to restore the foundational roles of sentiments and politics in the two men's systems of thought. Smith's Invisible Hand can be reunited with the human face, and heart, of free market liberalism; and Condorcet's march of enlightenment complicated by an unexpected emotional subtlety and philosophical uncertainty. Rothschild blends the history of economic thought with its social and political background, and sheds the light of contemporary ideas on both. The avowed purpose of her book is to realign Smith and Condorcet ideologically: rescuing Smith from conservative interpretations, and Condorcet from imputations of a 'cold, universal rationalism'. The tacit effect is to bring them politically closer to each other than one might naturally place them. Both can enter the ark of subsequent left-liberal thought: champions of economic liberty, but advocates too of political freedom, equity and justice. Rothschild's conclusion expresses nostalgia for a time before the long alliance of conservatism and economic laissez-faire, and quiet excitement at the prospect of a 21st-century political constellation breaking this mould. Each in their way, the rehabilitations of Smith and Condorcet seem designed to give a gentle nudge—deliberately short of clumsy programmatic recommendations—to insiders and statesmen of the new millennium.

Economic Sentiments is composed of a series of essays that in the main deal alternately with Smith and Condorcet, but also in part focus on themes

—political discussion and form, economic order and design—the two thinkers shared. The opening and closing chapters illuminate the overarching project, but the weight of the argument rests on discrete interpretations of the two theorists. There are some drawbacks to the way previously published essays have been collected here: central points, and citations from Smith and Condorcet, are often repeated. But Emma Rothschild's calm, understated style and thorough scholarship makes the book consistently enjoyable to read. The chapter on the Invisible Hand, in particular, spans a wide range of literary antecedents, contemporary theoretical arguments and modern economic thinking, which all combine to build an eloquent reinterpretation of Smith's famous metaphor. It is fair to say, however, that progressive elements in Smith's outlook have been unearthed in a number of scholarly works. It is clear, also, with whom Rothschild's sympathies lie: the cautious Smith, rather than the 'credulous' Condorcet. Her reconstruction of Condorcet's arguments and struggles is less comprehensive, and as the two are brought into closer orbit, it is Condorcet's trajectory that has to adjust most.

After his death Smith's immediate supporters popularized a conservative version of his thought, partly in reaction to the French Revolution, but also out of concern to deflect any suspicion that he was guilty of Hume's religious scepticism. Rothschild begins her analysis of the Scot with Beatrice Webb's re-examination of his work, in order to dispel any lingering doubts about its progressive credentials. The bulk of Smith's argument in the *Wealth of Nations* was against government regulation of the movement of goods and capital, especially taxes and bounties of a 'mercantilist' stamp. But throughout he stressed the wider benefits of the system of 'natural liberty'. Free mobility of the factors of production would lead, not just to a more efficient allocation of supply to meet demand, but also to investment of capital in response to future needs, deepening the division of labour and enriching the country as a whole. Increases of capital stock and revenue would lead to a growth in the demand for labour, and a 'liberal reward of labour' would be a 'natural symptom of increasing national wealth'.

In France during the same period, Turgot and Condorcet were both active in debates over economic reform that pitted them against Quesnay and the Physiocrats, an especial object of aversion for Smith, with whom (as with Hume) there were more distant interactions. For these thinkers too, a free market in basic goods—especially during drought or famine—was a political touchstone of the era. They shared with Smith the conviction that the exchange of commodities unencumbered by subsidies or price controls would distribute shortages more equitably and investment more productively. Yet, following his work on the famine in France during the 1770s, Turgot recommended intervention in labour markets to raise wages:

the poor had to be above subsistence level before market signals yielded incentives to remedy dearth. Turgot and Condorcet sought to establish which markets would be least distorted by intervention, and where it would be most effective: 'in the case of scarcity and famine, the criteria yield a clear ordering, where intervention in markets for corn is worst, and intervention in rural tenancies, training and labour markets is least bad'.

Whilst this exceeded any conception to be found in Smith, there were broader areas of agreement: simplification and rationalization of property laws to ensure the freedom to buy and sell on open markets, and a drive to dismantle such barriers to competition as guilds and apprenticeships. Turgot's wide-ranging reform edicts of 1776, presented to Louis XVI as a *Lit de Justice*, were lauded by Smith as a 'most valuable monument'. Much in the spirit of the *Wealth of Nations*, Turgot invited his readers to identify with the troubles of merchants operating in an insecure environment, harassed by changeable laws and at the uncertain mercy of the officials charged with enforcing them. Rothschild characteristically comments: 'Economic life is full of vexations, of visitations, of the concrete details of oppression. It is also full of emotions.' In her construction of the two thinkers, every economic transaction was for Smith and Condorcet suffused with sentiments, and it was on this foundation that each erected their wider accounts of economic and political justice.

It is well known that in the *Wealth of Nations* Smith ventured beyond his habitual dislike of feudal survivals to advocate universal, publicly funded education. As Rothschild notes, contemporary debates over the reformation of apprenticeship mostly revolved around the issue of incentives—what would best ensure a sober, hard-working population? Smith, however, insisted on a natural equality of talents: the differences between a philosopher and a street porter 'arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom and education'. Moreover, while schooling undoubtedly helped an economy to develop, its justification was not purely instrumental: a full education could also compensate for the uniform and stultifying jobs that often resulted from an increasing division of labour. Rothschild tracks changes in Condorcet's arguments, too, from education as a tool for instilling virtue and scientific understanding, to a view closer to Smith's: education not only as an end in itself, but part of a wider, pluralist political settlement. In a society constituted by opposing views, Condorcet saw liberal education as an essential way to institutionalize peaceful dissent and discussion. For Rothschild, society is coming of age here, not just its workers: she cites Bagehot's 'society of grown-up competitive commerce' to argue that independence in politics, education and the marketplace are mutually reinforcing.

The overall interpretation of Smith in *Economic Sentiments* rests in large measure on its account of the image of the Invisible Hand: a metaphor

used only three times across a lifetime of work but subsequently held, not least by Kenneth Arrow, to sum up Smith's finest contribution to political economy. Rothschild, by contrast, maintains that it should be viewed 'as a mildly ironic joke'. Comparing Smith's method to Thucydides, whom Smith admired for showing that 'nothing gives greater light into any train of actions than the characters of the actors', she aspires to something similar. A literal reading of the Invisible Hand, she suggests, would not just be inconsistent with Smith's vision of the moral independence of reflective economic agents, but also would ignore the irony Smith liked to direct at the all-seeing philosopher or wise statesman. The 'invisible hand of Jupiter'—Smith's first use of the term, in his 'History of Astronomy'—is clearly subject for mockery, in the credulity of polytheistic societies able to ascribe natural disasters to the gods but not the 'ordinary course of things'.

The Stoic Epictetus, by contrast, believed Jupiter had so ordered human reason that 'it can no longer be regarded as unsocial for a man to do everything for his own sake'—an ancient anticipation of the happy social outcome of individually self-interested actions in modern economics. Other literary usages of the same trope recalled by Rothschild point to a less cheerful prospect. Macbeth's 'bloody and invisible hand' is the darkness he calls down to cover his crime. Voltaire's version threatens Oedipus with the sword of vengeance, and rejects his offerings at the temple. Ovid's is more mundane, a human hand that cannot be seen because it strikes 'wound within wound' in a victim's back. Rothschild tells us this scene is depicted in the frontispiece of Smith's copy of the *Metamorphoses*, and dwells on his admiration for Voltaire's tragedies, his lectures on Shakespeare's use of metaphor and his attendance at a 'celebrated performance' of Macbeth. All this is entertaining enough, but how relevant is it to the rich merchants of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, who are 'led by an invisible hand, without intending it, without knowing it' to 'advance the interest of the society', or their successors in the *Wealth of Nations*, whose operations are depicted in a near-identical formulation?

Rothschild seeks a delicate settlement between different elements in Smith's thought. After making a good case for his scepticism of any providential order on earth, she also notes his conviction that economic actors who exert political influence to pursue their interests harm the wider welfare of society. The notion of the invisible hand served as a way of separating economics from politics, that might persuade politicians of the need to respect the boundaries between the two. Condorcet observed that it is not easy to convince officials of the attractions of doing nothing, and Smith was aware of the seductive appeal of grand systems: 'you will be more likely to persuade public men' if you appeal to their 'love of art and contrivance'. Here, Rothschild contends, lay the function of the invisible hand. Smith deploys it

as 'an obviating device; it crowds out weightier, mightier hands'—dissuading statesmen themselves from interfering with the workings of the market.

Beneficial but unintended economic outcomes could be the result of two sorts of process: a system that is self-organizing within a set of rules, and one in which the rules emerge as part of the outcome. Modern theories of economic equilibrium depict the former. The latter, grander notion has been best developed by Hayek. The realm of social theory, for Hayek, is that of unintended patterns and regularities: social processes are '*ex definitione* not conscious'. The involuntary regularities they exhibit are selected by evolutionary mechanisms: rules that lead to economic success promote the survival of the groups that practise them. This conception provides reasons, at once, for economic optimism and a degree of social conservatism: we have inherited our economic institutions because they work and, since we profit from them, there is a moral imperative to uphold them.

Rothschild wants to distinguish Smith's vision from Hayek's on three grounds. The Scottish reformer opposed a range of traditional institutions, including the 'barbarous' provisions of inheritance law itself, and more generally the 'violence' of feudal arrangements. He took social processes, including economic transactions, to be reflexive human activities such that unintended patterns were the result of both conscious and unconscious practices. Finally, he held that we must be aware of moral obligations for them to have any force. Economic institutions should take their place within a wider enlightenment, as superstitions make way for a more rational, public morality. For Smith and Condorcet it was a vital part of such enlightenment, Rothschild claims, that political freedoms would lead people to participate in debates about the prevailing economic system. For Hayek, of course, this was a danger rather than an opportunity—but he was writing two centuries later, when the market had lost its pre-revolutionary innocence.

If Rothschild's Smith is epistemologically more modest than Hayek, he is also more naive—his optimism about free trade relying on general moral and intellectual progress, and the mildness and thoughtfulness of most men and women. Here, uncharacteristically, Rothschild strikes a disabused note: 'This, and little more, is the foundation of the system of economic freedom. It is a pious hope, as well as a shortcoming of liberal thought.' Not much follows, however, from this unsettling intuition. Another problem for liberals, she notes later, was to be the interaction of money and power, as those with economic weight sought to influence the political process to obtain favourable regulations and monopolies. Yet, as Smith and Condorcet understood, an enlightened society consists of people with theories, and even visions of the greater good. How is a liberal to determine whether attempts to influence the economy are of the first or second type? For both her heroes were

also aware of the 'self-delusion', or *fausse conscience*, whereby people come to identify their own interests with those of society as a whole.

It is in this area—the problems of social choice—that *Economic Sentiments* turns to a fuller examination of Condorcet. Both Turgot and Condorcet worked on systems of decentralized decision-making, and prescribed policies for imperfectly competitive conditions. If interventions in the labour market were recommended for famines, social insurance schemes were also proposed in part to ensure that the poor had some minimum of assets in times of misfortune or shortage. The economic theory behind these prescriptions rested on the modern foundation of individual calculations of utility. Rothschild counterposes Condorcet's early mathematical investigations sharply to his later concern for viable mechanisms of social choice, amidst increasing moral and political freedom. The contrast is strained, as her over-pitched rhetoric suggests:

he seemed at times to be divided, like Faust, between two souls; between the philosopher's interest in the world of individual, diverse lives and the mathematician's interest in the bright and glittering world of numbers and lines.

Condorcet's work on social choice is perhaps his most famous intellectual legacy. Turgot had noted the structural difficulty of a problem also described by Smith: there could be majority opposition to a laissez-faire system as a result of individuals each favouring only one exception to the necessary reforms. Condorcet widened the problem to characterize a realm of decision-making dilemmas where the distribution of preferences could prevent a decisive majority vote. His original example concerns three positions: any restriction placed on commerce is an injustice; only those restrictions placed through general laws can be just; restrictions placed by particular orders can be just. His solution was to reduce such options, including all decisions about taxation, to a sequence of 'propositions which are contradictory pairwise'.

A contemporary British example could be cited, given Condorcet's advocacy of a second representative chamber, of the deadlocks he sought to avoid. In a recent House of Commons vote, although a majority of MPs were in favour of an increasingly elected House of Lords, no decision on the form it should take could be reached, and the government was able to leave it wholly appointed. Condorcet's solution, cumbersome in terms of the number of votes required—it later became the basis of STV electoral systems—would have prevented New Labour engineering this outcome. Condorcet's general approach was the antithesis of Rousseau's: rather than uncovering a latent General Will, his procedures were intended to yield social decisions that 'correspond, to a sufficiently reliable extent, to the opinions of individuals'. In economics, analogously, there was not necessarily any 'natural' price: in

imperfect conditions, true prices were those—as Rothschild puts it—which would obtain if the ‘relevant market procedures were to be augmented, where necessary, on the basis of fair procedures for social decisions’.

Holding up to the light Condorcet’s writings on social and economic choice, the variety of individual preferences, and the importance of free political discussion, Rothschild hopes to counterbalance a prejudicial image of him as the epitome of a ‘cold, universalist Enlightenment’. So represented, Condorcet may seem ‘an apparently incongruous figure’ who ‘believes in the diversity of sentiments and the uniformity of rules’; and he was certainly rather too trusting in the prospects for the human race. In his posthumously published *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, written whilst in hiding and shortly before death, he wrote that ‘the moral goodness of man, the necessary consequence of his constitution, is capable of indefinite perfection like all his other faculties, and nature has linked together in an unbreakable chain truth, happiness and virtue’. But at his best, she argues, Condorcet shared Smith’s philosophical scepticism, his respect for human diversity and the value of public debate, and—not least—his methodological individualism.

Yet in bringing Smith and Condorcet into such close company, Rothschild sidesteps or misrepresents vital features of both figures. Condorcet’s dual (even Faustian) nature is overdone, and his active political involvement and substantive policy recommendations underplayed; just as Smith’s scepticism is allowed to obscure the range and extent of his defence of the free market. Both Webb and Rothschild correctly note, for example, the reforming zeal in Smith’s work, but his fire remained directed at feudal, mercantilist and corporate institutions. Smith was adamant that the system of ‘natural liberty’ was just in itself, independent of concerns about distribution. Rothschild quotes with approval Smith’s sentiment that ‘it is but equity, besides’ that ‘they who feed, clothe and lodge the whole body of the people’ should ‘themselves be tolerably well fed’. Subsequent passages, making it clear that falling wages can be checked only by a reduction in the supply of labour, are glossed over. Smith’s concern with equity had no egalitarian content.

Contrary to the attitudes of most of his contemporaries, Smith argued that his system should be ruthlessly adhered to in times of general shortage, whatever the short-term costs, since its logic would eventually lead to the necessary reallocation of capital and investment. Over time, a world-wide division of labour would benefit all: yet, given Smith’s own views on the determination of the price of labour by supply and demand, it is hard to see what mechanisms would yield it proportional rewards. The only one on offer, it seems, is the ‘pious hope’ that merchants enlightened by a public education will come to realize where their long-term interests lie. The actual

effects of Smithian policies in the market for basic foods were tested out in Ireland and India. Mike Davis has shown the consequence of their enthusiastic application in the subcontinent: the Raj's refusal to intervene during droughts led to devastating famines and millions of deaths, amid record exports to the rich world. The results of the same inflexibility in the Great Famine of mid-19th century Ireland are well known. Smith's policy recommendations were at odds with his sporadic concern with 'equity', in a way that Condorcet's were not. Rothschild's conflation of the two obscures this critical difference.

Although she notes that Condorcet's public life stood in marked contrast to Smith's—'deeply engaged in the events of the French Revolution, as an elected politician, a daily parliamentary reporter, a member of government commissions', and eventual victim of the Terror—the actual fruits of his political involvement, under the monarchy and the republic, receive small attention. Rothschild mentions his scheme for social insurance, but gives the impression he thought only sporadic, ad hoc interventions, along the lines envisaged by Turgot, were necessary. In fact, where Smith believed economic progress would spontaneously keep inequality in check, Condorcet proposed a substantial, permanent programme of social insurance and redistribution to ensure a livelihood for the old, the widowed and the orphaned, to be funded purely by direct taxation. He even anticipated current schemes for 'baby bonds': capital was to be released to the young when they came of age. It was in visionary ideas like these that Condorcet attempted to reconcile his mathematical approach to social issues with his concern for the fate of individuals: 'the application of the calculus to the probabilities of life and the [social] investment of money' in a 'sufficiently comprehensive and exhaustive fashion' to prevent poverty. Condorcet would have seemed a less incongruous, and perhaps less credulous, character if Rothschild had engaged more thoroughly with such proposals. They at least address, if they do not resolve, the first of her 'shortcomings of liberal thought': its difficulty in grappling with the ways in which economic power finds expression in the political realm.

The side of Condorcet that Rothschild is keener to stress is one that apparently places him at the origins of a line of intellectual history that descends through Mill, Constant and Tocqueville: an anti-utilitarian pluralism, warm in defence of mutually reinforcing political and economic freedoms. Here he becomes a thinker who seeks to introduce delay into constitutional decisions, fears unicameralism, opposes strong executive power. This incrementalist image is at odds with the radical passion of his commitment to—not just social and political, but also racial and sexual—equality, condemning 'our treachery, our murderous contempt for men of another colour or creed' in Africa and Asia, or calling for 'the complete

annihilation of the prejudices that have brought about an inequality of rights between the sexes'. Rothschild collects the oxymorons his contemporaries used to describe Condorcet, from d'Alembert's 'snow-covered volcano' to Robespierre's 'timid conspirator' and Turgot's 'enraged sheep'. But she does not extend the same intellectual care to the background of his ideas that she affords Smith. These can only really be understood in a French context of absolutist power, reformist hopes and revolutionary explosions that have no parallels across the Channel.

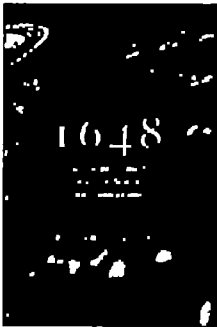
In a quite opposite spirit, *Economic Sentiments* treats the French Revolution as something like a historical aberration, that has concealed the evolutionary progress of liberal wisdom. Tocqueville argued that the events of the 1790s obscured what came before: the origins and spread of revolutionary ideas in the Ancien Régime. For Rothschild, they also hid the foundations of what came after: 'the extent to which the origins of nineteenth-century liberal ideas are to be found in the French Enlightenment, and especially in the Enlightenment critique—including Condorcet's critique—of the enlightened despotism of the 1760s'. In this retrospect, the watershed that now allows us to rediscover this forgotten legacy is the end of European communism in 1989–91, which is dissolving the long post-Napoleonic coalition between laissez-faire and political conservatism. The 'eventual defeat' of the 'positive theory of the coordination of economic life' allows us 'to remember a different economic Enlightenment': one that championed individual rights and liberties, and the civilizing values of temperate political discussion and moderate dissent.

What political conclusions does *Economic Sentiments* draw from this favourable turn of affairs? Rothschild concedes some misgivings, since 'economic freedom is founded upon the equality of individuals, and it is at the same time subversive of equality'. But she ends the book on a disconcerting note. Commenting on the sentiments that accompany economic insecurity, she quotes Smith—here taken somewhat out of context—as remarking: 'it is these uneasy emotions that chiefly affect us and give us a pleasing anxiety'. Can it be that she is referring to the compensations offered by the wider vistas of the 21st century's 'universe of commerce'? Perhaps the key to Rothschild's pleasurable anxiety comes a little earlier, when she contrasts her own approach to political economy with that of John Stuart Mill, who once defined it as 'the wall of a city' around the territory of economic life, a science with its own jurisdiction and methods of investigation.

Rothschild casts her eyes back to 'an earlier and less bounded scene' in the 18th century: 'I have looked, like Adam Smith in the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles, for a "romantic wildness".' Smith himself, of course, had contributed not a little to building Mill's fortifications, dismantling the last feudal outposts. In the passage Rothschild cites, his argument is that we are

affected by Philoctetes's solitude, rather than his suffering. The implication might be that, as Tocqueville's isolated individuals, we suffer the anxieties of abandonment but the pleasures of consumption, in our romantically postmodern wilds. These are less sentiments than sentimentalisms, as ways of describing the economic inequality and insecurity of the age of Blair and Bush.

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TONY WOOD

METAMORPHOSES OF PRINCE M

In 1931 Roman Jakobson published an essay entitled 'On a Generation That Squandered Its Poets'. It was both a tribute to Vladimir Mayakovsky, who had committed suicide the previous year, and a wider diagnosis of the talented levy of writers born in Russia between 1880 and 1895, several of whom—Nikolai Gumilev, Aleksandr Blok, Velimir Khlebnikov, Sergei Esenin—had also met untimely ends. Common to all of them, Jakobson argued, was an agonizing contradiction between transcendental hopes for the future and the stubborn resistance of material life. Mayakovsky's exit was not, of course, the only option available: many writers of the same generation, including Jakobson himself, chose exile; others, such as Anna Akhmatova, opted for stoical silence or, like Boris Pasternak, found some form of accommodation with the increasingly bleak realities of Stalin's Russia. Others still—Isaak Babel, Osip Mandelshtam—were later consumed by the Gulag. But they were united by an inescapable, comfortless condition: 'the paroxysm of an irreplaceable generation turned out to be no private fate,' wrote Jakobson, 'but in fact the face of our time, the very breath of history.'

In Mirsky—born in 1890—all the dilemmas and destinies of this tragic generation were gathered into a single lifetime: after fighting for the Whites in the Civil War, he went into exile, and was principally based in London; then in the late 1920s he reconciled himself to the Soviet state and became a Marxist, moving back to Russia in 1932. After a series of shrill denunciations from his critics, he was arrested in 1937 and sent to the camps of Kolyma, where he died in 1939. Best known for his commanding *History of Russian Literature* (1927), Mirsky was first and foremost a literary critic, but was able to turn his formidable intellect to almost any subject with equal

agility—writing two separate histories of Russia in the late 1920s, as well as a brilliant, acerbic portrait of the British intelligentsia in the mid-1930s; aside from this there was a constant stream of articles on a range of subjects and periods, nearly all illuminated by his extraordinary insight and erudition. Yet unlike many other Russian writers, Mirsky left no widow to tend his legacy, nor a substantial archive of personal papers from which scholars could fashion a faithful portrait. *D. S. Mirsky: A Russian-English Life*, the result of decades of work, is the first full account of Mirsky's eventful and complicated trajectory. Drawing on everything from scrawled childhood letters to NKVD files, G. S. Smith has made an impressive and highly valuable contribution to the study of a fascinating, long-neglected figure.

Dmitrii Sviatopolk-Mirsky came from one of Russia's most ancient princely families—descended from Sviatopolk the Accursed, briefly Grand Prince of Kiev in the eleventh century—and divided his extremely comfortable childhood between Petersburg, the family estate near Kharkov and resorts in England, then the fashionable destination for the Imperial aristocracy. His father was a high functionary of the Tsarist regime, and served briefly as Minister of the Interior after the assassination of Plehve in 1904. Forced to resign after Bloody Sunday, he was warmly remembered by the liberal intelligentsia for amnestying a number of prominent figures, including Maxim Gorky. The diaries of Mirsky's mother reveal her, too, to have had considerable political acumen—during the disturbances of 1905, she affirmed that the only means of staving off revolution was agrarian reform, along precisely the lines Stolypin was to adopt in 1907. Mirsky's privileged background ensured he received a good education: home tuition in English, French, German, Latin and Greek, followed by attendance at the Imperial Lycée in Moscow and the Tenishev School in Petersburg, of which Nabokov and Mandelshtam were later alumni. In 1908 he began studying Oriental languages at St Petersburg University, but left to join the Imperial Army in 1911; in which he was to serve—apart from an interval during which he studied for a degree in Ancient history—until March 1918. Pictures of Mirsky as an officer show a bearded figure with already thinning hair, giving the camera a sly, challenging look.

The climate of late Imperial Russia was intellectually cosmopolitan—Bergson and Nietzsche were, it seems, required reading—but also pervaded by an expectant mysticism. An excitable piece of prose that formed part of Mirsky's literary debut in 1906—'But we have lost our faith, we are seeking the new, the insane and the false perhaps, we love our future with our passionate natures, with our hopeless and disenchanting Love'—conveys something of the flavour of the epoch. At this time Mirsky and his friends associated with Viacheslav Ivanov and Mikhail Kuzmin, leading literary celebrities of the day, and notorious for their drunken revels. In the

years leading up to the Revolution, Mirsky also moved in the same circles as Akhmatova, Nikolai Punin and Gumilev. Legend has it that in 1911 the latter bumped into Mirsky in Tsarskoe Selo, having read his first book of poems, and commented, 'Not bad for a Guards officer'—whereupon Mirsky apparently had a footman purchase and destroy all remaining copies. At any rate, Mirsky never counted the book among his publications, and thereafter devoted himself to criticism alone.

Mirsky rejoined his regiment as soon as war broke out in 1914, serving on the German front until the summer of 1916. Around August of that year he seems to have been disgraced for refusing to drink the Tsar's health, and was transferred to the Caucasian front until the demobilization of spring 1918, when he made his way back to Kharkov. The city was soon caught up in the Civil War, changing hands between Reds and Whites several times in 1918–20. Having left for the Crimea in late 1918, along with many other White emigrants—Nabokov among them—who subsequently departed on British, French or Greek ships, Mirsky then re-entered the fray, joining Denikin's army in March 1919 and taking part in actions across Southern Russia. He was later to voice admiration for literary evocations of the Civil War by Babel and Sholokhov, noting that 'on all sides—White, Red and Green—it was accompanied by nameless cruelty.'

After Denikin's defeat, Mirsky was briefly interned by the Poles before escaping to Greece, via Austria. From Athens he began writing for the *London Mercury*, and by July 1921 had moved to London permanently, believing it would provide him with the best opportunities for earning a living. Mirsky's grasp of English was already formidable, rivalled only by that of Nabokov; but the choice may also have been dictated in part by the Anglophile preferences of his class, since his French and German were almost equally good. On the other hand, Mirsky's mother and two sisters—his father had died in 1914—chose France, and the bulk of the White emigration opted for Paris or Berlin. The isolation that would result from a move to England seems, however, not to have entered Mirsky's calculations—here, as elsewhere, ties of family or friendship were no obstacle to his decisions.

In 1922 Mirsky began teaching Russian literature and language at the School of Slavonic Studies, and from then until his departure to the USSR in 1932 he divided his time between London (during term) and various parts of France (as soon as he could escape). While in London he associated with Russophiles and Bloomsburyites, whom he was to attack so sharply in *The Intelligentsia of Great Britain*. Acquaintances describe Mirsky at this time as shabbily dressed and 'painfully shy'. In his autobiography Leonard Woolf (perhaps under the combined influence of hindsight and Slav stereotypes) wrote that Mirsky's face always contained 'the shadow of a smile . . . but it is the baleful smile of the shark or crocodile.' A fellow Russian émigré,

Flora Solomon, described him as a 'rip-roaring *bon viveur*', doubtless referring to Mirsky's penchant for alcohol and his impressive *gourmandise*—he seems to have devoted a great deal of his time in France to what Smith terms 'gastronomic tourism'. These binges aside, Mirsky seems to have lived fairly frugally, funded by a steady salary from teaching and the stream of cheques that resulted from his phenomenal productivity as a freelancer. Unlike that of other exiles, Mirsky's life seems to have been relatively comfortable; he certainly never occupied himself with everyday chores—Smith suggests that 'in all likelihood Mirsky never shopped for, let alone cooked and cleaned up after, a single meal in his entire life', though this is perhaps to overstate the comfort of his years in Moscow. Still, in later years an Italian journalist could taunt Mirsky with the fact that he had been a parasite under three regimes: prince under the Tsars, professor under capitalism and writer in the USSR.

There seem to have been only a handful of people to whom Mirsky—very much a loner—was genuinely close, and his private life remains shrouded in mystery. Though Kuzmin was overtly homosexual, there is no indication that the youthful Mirsky was especially interested in the physical element of his 'deviance'. His interest in writers such as Konstantin Leontiev, Vasilii Rozanov, D. H. Lawrence and André Gide, all preoccupied either privately or publicly with same-sex relations, was also largely intellectual. It seems that Mirsky was not much intrigued by the opposite sex either: an impetuous, fortnight-long marriage to one of his nurses in a field hospital in 1916 aside, he seems to have had only two brief, failed liaisons with women. One was with Vera Suvchinskaja, wife of his friend and fellow émigré Petr Suvchinskii; the other was with Marina Tsvetaeva, whose reputation he did more to secure than anyone else.

Tsvetaeva and the other poets of her generation were all but unknown to Anglophone readers when Mirsky arrived in 1922. There were no surveys of Russian literature that went beyond 1890, and though Dostoevsky became very popular in England around the time of the First World War, little Russian writing produced since then was available in translation. Mirsky's earliest writings introduced English readers to Blok, Akhmatova, Gumilev, Mayakovsky and Pasternak, but he performed his greatest service to Russian letters in the two magisterial books he produced in the mid-1920s: *Contemporary Russian Literature, 1881–1925* (1926) and *A History of Russian Literature from the Earliest Times to the Death of Dostoevsky* (1927). These are masterpieces of condensed, penetrating analysis, full of memorable insights and characterizations—Tolstoy is a 'Euclid of moral quantities', whereas Dostoevsky 'deals in the elusive calculus of fluid values'; the latter's characters are described as 'atoms charged with the electricity of ideas'. Mirsky offers his opinions with breathtaking self-assuredness, fearlessly calibrating the components of an entire literary tradition. He has sharp

words for Chekhov—wondering ‘whether the advanced elite of the Western world has definitely reached a stage of mental senility that can be satisfied only by [his] autumnal genius’—and for many of his contemporaries: Viktor Shklovskii is ‘brilliant’ but his writing is ‘affected and untidy’, ‘essentially superficial’. Most notable of all, however, is Mirsky’s engagement with Soviet literature—Babel, Boris Pilniak, Evgenii Zamiatin—and his attitude towards the literary emigration, which ‘has no healthy undergrowth: not a single poet or novelist of any importance has emerged from the ranks of the young generation outside Russia.’

Though Nabokov had not established himself by the time Mirsky wrote *Contemporary Russian Literature*, the absence of any discussion of his work in Mirsky’s later writings is startling. Mirsky was, after all, extremely thorough, and a judicious critic even of talents he found unsympathetic. One possible explanation for this—and it should be noted that Nabokov owes his stature above all to works not written in Russian—lies in Mirsky’s conviction that Russian émigré culture, locked in the Imperial past and with an ever dwindling audience, was entering a long death agony. He wrote for almost every one of the major émigré literary publications, across the spectrum from monarchist to *SR*, between 1922 and 1927, provocatively discussing émigré and Soviet writers side by side, and insisting on literary culture as a living link between the two. But by 1927 he had concluded that the emigration was part of a dying cultural formation, and that even its most talented writers, such as Vladislav Khodasevich, were doomed merely to provide immaculate echoes of past glories.

There was, however, one strand of thought original to the emigration, with which Mirsky became closely associated in the mid-1920s. Eurasianism had its origins in a collection of essays published in Sofia in 1921 by a group of Russian intellectuals, including the prominent linguist Nikolai Trubetskoi. Though it was in many respects an heir to the Slavophile tradition—rather than the Westernizing tendencies that were the other pole structuring the Russian intellectual field—Eurasianism broke with it by refusing its attachment to ethnic Slavdom, insisting instead on Russia’s connexions with eastern civilizations. Its essence lay in a view of Eurasia as a single geopolitical entity, peopled neither by Europeans nor Asiatics, but by an agglomeration of peoples drawing their identity and mores from the processes of mastering the vast spaces they inhabit. In this view, the Mongols exerted a positive influence, since they preserved Eurasia as a single dominion, protecting it from the parcellizing tendencies of Western European creeds and kingdoms. By the same logic, the Eurasians arrived at a positive verdict on the results of Bolshevik rule, though they were opposed to its ideology. Their clandestine attempts to influence Soviet policy led to

the group's infiltration by the GPU, a murky episode Mirsky seems to have known little or nothing about.

He first made contact with this current via Petr Suvchinskii, whom he met in 1922; Mirsky's energetic correspondence with Suvchinskii, which continued until 1931, is a key source for Smith, and gives rare insights into his ideas and opinions. Though Mirsky had reservations about Eurasianism from the start—concerning its claim on Orthodoxy and insistence on regarding Russia as entirely culturally distinct from Europe—he was closely involved with its publications from 1925 until his turn to Marxism in 1929. His greatest contribution was undoubtedly the journal he was largely responsible for editing, *Versity* (*Mileposts*), the three issues of which came out in 1926, 1927 and 1928. Alongside the writings of the Eurasianists, they included contributions both from émigré writers such as Aleksei Remizov, Lev Shestov, Nikolai Berdiaev and Tsvetaeva, and from writers based in the USSR—Andrei Belyi, Iurii Tynianov and Babel. The second issue is notable for its non-Russian contributors: E. M. Forster, with an article that seems to have been an early draft of *Aspects of the Novel*, and Bernard Groethuysen and Ramón Fernández, two French intellectuals whom Mirsky had met at the annual gatherings of select *littérateurs* at Pontigny. Here he also met Gide, who brought him into contact with the journal *Commerce*, and with the social circles of Versailles, which included Paul Valéry, Eric Satie, Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Maurice Ravel, André Derain and Julien Benda.

Roger Fry met Mirsky at Pontigny in 1925, and recorded a conversation in which Mirsky claimed to be impatiently awaiting the onset of a new Dark Ages. 'I'm not interested in Europe, it's done for', Mirsky apparently said, adding that Russia was 'freeing itself and is going to create new conceptions of life'. Distaste for the bourgeois materialist culture of the West was, of course, a long-standing Russian tradition both among the radical intelligentsia and sentimental aristocracy. Though he belonged to the latter by class, Mirsky was undoubtedly more akin to the former in his rigorously analytical cast of mind, and seems to have had diffuse radical sympathies at an early age—though in the early twenties he considered himself an 'anti-Bolshevik'. His pessimism with regard to Europe may have been partly nourished by his reading of Spengler, whose gloomy portrait of *Abendlandia* struck a chord in Russia. In Mirsky's letters to Suvchinskii there are repeated references to the decay of European civilization, to England 'drying up and dying' and Germany 'rotting'. Smith suggests that the Eurasians' rapprochement with Soviet power was simply an accommodation to the 'current ruling ideology of Russian imperial power', much as Berdiaev and others had made their peace with Orthodoxy in 1909 in the famous *Vekhi* (*Landmarks*) collection. But Mirsky's constant preoccupation with notions of vitality and his frequent use of somatic metaphors suggest a deeper need to locate the

pulse of history. Indeed, after the two books on Russian literature, Mirsky increasingly turned to the study of history. In 1927 he wrote a short *History of Russia*, and in the following year began work on a larger work, *Russia: A Social History*. At roughly the same time, he translated the two volumes of the Marxist historian Mikhail Pokrovskii's *Brief History of Russia*.

Smith views Mirsky's turn to Marxism as a descent into dogma, after which his language became cluttered with jargon. It is true that Mirsky seems to have become a man very much of the Party line, and the resounding Stalinist certainties have become painfully dated. But what Mirsky found in Marxism was something he had previously lacked—a sense of system, of methodical explanation, where before there had only been the criteria of good judgement. Mirsky had certainly read Lenin, Marx and Trotsky by the mid-twenties, since he commented on them in *Contemporary Russian Literature*—disparaging Trotsky's 'slovenly' style, but admiring Lenin's lucidity and 'keen sense of irony'. Best of all, Lenin's writings were 'those of a man of action', perhaps the highest term of praise in Mirsky's vocabulary. As Smith observes, throughout his life Mirsky seems to have been in search of a union of thought and action, always admiring decisiveness and despising airy speculation—hence, perhaps, his distaste for Chekhov's 'horrid contemptible humanitarianism, pity, contempt and squeamishness towards humankind', as he put it in a letter to Suvchinskii in October 1924.

In September 1931 Mirsky published 'Histoire d'une libération' in the *Nouvelle revue française*, an account of his intellectual trajectory from idealism to materialism. He now poured scorn on Eurasianism, as a typically eccentric product of the mystical ambience of pre-Revolutionary Russia—though its late 'Christian materialist' phase had introduced him to Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*. He cites the personal influences of Gorky—whom he met in Sorrento in 1928—and Maurice Dobb on his 'emancipation', but the key moments were, as ever, intellectual: his reading of Pokrovskii, and a commission to write a biography of Lenin in August 1929, the completely hagiographic result of which was published in 1931. Through Lenin Mirsky rapidly came to Marx, and to communism: on 17 October 1929 Mirsky told Suvchinskii that he had put up a portrait of Stalin in his room, facing a map of the world. A week later came the Wall Street Crash.

Mirsky clearly felt he had found the heartbeat of the future. He had been appalled by the 'bestly and inhuman face of the British bourgeoisie' during the General Strike, and now allied himself with its opponents, joining the CPGB in the summer of 1931. At the same time, he sought to obtain a Soviet passport—he had been stateless since 1921, having refused the League of Nations' Nansen passport. But he seems initially to have been planning only a visit to the USSR, since he was also seeking leave to re-enter Britain. His activities on behalf of the Communist Party had, however, caused frictions

with his employer at the School of Slavonic Studies, Bernard Pares, who refused to vouch for Mirsky's reliability before the British authorities—which meant any departure from London would be permanent. Smith excuses this by pointing to the fraught climate of the time; but Pares also warned a colleague in the US of Mirsky's affiliations, thus closing off another avenue he had been exploring. There has been much sage liberal tutting about Mirsky's decision to leave for the USSR, but it should not be forgotten that his London acquaintances helped make the choice an irrevocable one.

In January 1930 he had written to a friend based in the US, 'my communism notwithstanding, I really can't go to the USSR—I'm socially alien no matter what.' After a final summer in France, the 'Comrade Prince' arrived by boat in Leningrad in September 1932, and settled in Moscow. He seems to have been extremely isolated in his final years, living in cramped quarters, often without access to a bathroom. Malcolm Muggeridge met him at this time, and based the character of Prince Alexis in his novel *Winter in Moscow* (1934) on him—'a dark-bearded man with a decaying mouth; savage and unhappy and lonely.' Nevertheless, the last five years of Mirsky's freedom were extremely productive, accounting for around a quarter of his total publications. There were articles on Joyce, Kipling, Swift, Smollett, Defoe, Dos Passos, Whitman, Gertrude Stein, Shelley, Aldous Huxley, as well as on Russian writers such as Tolstoy, Khlebnikov and the novelist and playwright Iurii Olesha—a friend of Mirsky's who dubbed him 'Tsar Dima'. There were also surveys of Tadzhik and Georgian poetry, a complimentary but critical piece about a 1934 essay by Lukács on the novel—it is unclear if he and Mirsky ever met—and encyclopaedia articles on Romanticism and on Realism, from the Greeks to Gorky. He also edited a seminal anthology of translations of English poetry, including Yeats, Eliot and Auden, though his name was removed from it at the last minute after his arrest; generations of Russian poets, including Iosif Brodsky, were greatly influenced by a book not known to have been Mirsky's work until relatively recently.

In 1934 Mirsky published the most important of his Soviet-era works, *Intelligentsia*—its title reproduces the English mangling of the Russian word—which was translated into English as *The Intelligentsia of Great Britain* in 1935. It was met with howls of indignation in Bloomsbury, seen as an 'unfair, unwarranted, and unforgivable outburst'. Smith finds that it 'teems with sneering, arrogant contempt for the British intellectual elite'. It is certainly scathing about the general philosophical poverty of British culture. Almost every prominent figure and strand of thought comes under attack: Fabians, 'progressives', Keynes, the 'high-brows', Shaw, the Bloomsburyites—who are 'extremely intrigued by their own minutest inner experiences, and count them an inexhaustible treasure store of further more minutious inner experiences.' But Mirsky also acknowledges genuine talent and intelligence

when he sees it—Woolf, Eliot, Joyce, Keynes, Huxley, Bertrand Russell. What the book's British readers would have found distasteful was its linkage of intellectual developments to the fortunes of empire, and its sharp dissection of the progressives' role in preserving capitalism. The Stalinist rigidity others have discerned in the book, meanwhile, does not operate in a vacuum: in Mirsky's account, capitalism was doomed, and the only choice facing his contemporaries was between communism and a semi-conscious drift into fascism: civilization and barbarism.

In August 1933 Mirsky was one of 120 writers sent to glorify the White Sea–Baltic Canal project. He was part of a seven-man writing brigade that also included Viktor Shklovskii, whose brother was one of the prisoners building the canal in subhuman conditions. Mirsky apparently asked the deputy head of the GPU a number of awkward questions about the savings being made by using unpaid labour—a dreadful political *faux pas*, but also a sign of his continued mental independence. A young writer with whom Mirsky shared a train compartment on the way back to Moscow reconstructed a conversation in which he once again displays this independence; but there are also intimations of great disappointment. 'There's a lot I like about what's been done and is being done. But there's a lot I don't understand . . . I can clearly see shortcomings, miscalculations, mistakes, omissions, and sometimes even arbitrariness . . . Everywhere you go here, some secret has been hidden. Under every dam. Under every lock. In the destiny and the labour of each and every soldier in the canal army.'

Mirsky became embroiled in a series of literary rows during 1934, the most hazardous of which centred around the significance of Pushkin—whom Mirsky accused of servility before the autocracy, at precisely the time when this was being refurbished as a Soviet virtue—and the latest novel by Aleksandr Fadeev. Mirsky had admired Fadeev's *The Rout* (1927), but found *The Last of the Udege* (1934) vastly inferior, and an artistic mistake. Fadeev, however, was a prominent figure in the Union of Writers, and a host of literary bureaucrats leapt to his defence. As on other occasions, Mirsky was saved from their wrath by the intervention of Gorky; after the latter's death in June 1936, however, Mirsky was in an increasingly vulnerable position, and was publicly attacked in *Pravda* several times during 1936 and 37, as the 'voice of Bukharin' and a 'Wrangelite'. In January 1937 he tried to claw his way to safety with an article exulting in the impending trial and execution of Radek and Piatakov, and in May wrote a letter admitting his 'mistakes' to the Secretary General of the Writer's Union; but this was at the height of the purges, and survivals were a rare event among writers. Mirsky was arrested on the night of 2–3 June 1937, sentenced to eight years' hard labour for 'suspected espionage' at the end of July, and arrived in one of the Kolyma camps on 24 September, where he was put to

work on logging. From the NKVD archives Smith has unearthed the chilling transcripts of Mirsky's interrogations, and his three-monthly work reports from the Atka camp authorities, which impassively plot the decline of his health until his death in June 1939. He was found to be innocent and rehabilitated in 1962.

Witness to war, revolution and exile, to capitalist crisis and communist construction, Mirsky lived the dangers and disappointments of his generation like very few others. Though his treatments of Mirsky's books are perhaps a little brief, and despite a strange squeamishness about Mirsky's Marxist writings, Smith has provided an admirable account of man assailed by a succession of certainties—choosing exile to escape certain death after the Civil War, choosing communism to forge what he saw as the only viable future. Perhaps the most painful certainty, however, was the one he encountered on arrival in the USSR: that he was 'socially alien', unwanted and unnecessary to the cause he had chosen out of pure conviction. Nor was this merely a personal phenomenon: as Mirsky himself argued in his obituary of Mayakovsky—published in Berlin in a small book alongside Jakobson's tribute—the generation born in the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century had overturned the otherworldly aesthetic of their predecessors, but still in the name of an individualistic outlook that had now been superseded by Soviet life. The 'objective meaning' of Mayakovsky's suicide lay in an acknowledgement of this stark fact: Mayakovsky 'laid bare his antique soul only in order to murder it'. Mirsky, by contrast, proved unwilling to surrender his talent for critical, individual thinking; but his 'antique soul' was consumed by history's harsh breath.

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PETER GOWAN

US : UN

DURING THE TWENTIETH century, American leaders twice promulgated ambitious collective security institutions for resolving international conflicts. Each time, no sooner were the projects launched than they were undermined, or transformed, from within the United States itself. Wilson's idea of a League of Nations foundered on Republican opposition in the Senate. Roosevelt's conception of the United Nations was aborted by the Democrat Administration of his successor. By 1950, the Truman Administration, guided by Dean Acheson, had hit upon a quite different political framework for managing world politics. This did not require dismantling the UN or withdrawing from it; the world body and its agencies performed too many useful functions for the US for that. But it did mean demoting it to no more than a secondary role, as an auxiliary instrument of American diplomacy. As Dean Acheson later put it, the UN was 'certainly an American contribution to a troubled world, [but] I personally am free of the slightest suspicion of paternity'.¹

The fact that American leaders had, by the end of the 1940s, sidelined the Rooseveltian project for the UN was not immediately or transparently obvious. Indeed, the moment this mutation became complete was, on the surface, a triumph for Washington in mobilizing the UN for its own uses: to back Western intervention in the Korean civil war. But by then the UN had, in fact, been abandoned as the vehicle through which American global dominance would find expression. It had been downgraded, and folded into a strategic and institutional framework alien to Roosevelt's initial design for the organization. By the 1960s, indeed, the UN was regarded in Washington as not only a secondary but in some ways a vexatious affair, once former European colonies and other states organized themselves into the Non-Aligned Movement and used the General Assembly as a platform to ventilate opinions unwelcome to

the State Department. Such developments prompted Acheson to declare publicly that 'the votes in the United Nations mean less than nothing'.¹ In private, Acheson's sentiments about the organization were far more pungent. With WASP disdain for the Russian-born functionary who was the Roosevelt Administration's encyclopaedic UN technical engineer, he would refer to 'that little rat Leo Pasvol'sky's United Nations'.²

Pasvol'sky is long forgotten. Yet so too is the vast two-month conclave that established the UN order. There is an enormous Anglo-Saxon literature on Versailles and a very substantial one on the Congress of Vienna. Large numbers of people have heard of the treaties of Westphalia. But San Francisco? The conference launching the UN Charter and the UN has been largely obliterated from the public memory of the Anglo-American world. If post-war Austria's great achievement has been to convince the world that Hitler was a German and Beethoven an Austrian, there have been periods in which conservatives in the US have achieved similar success in persuading many Americans that the UN has been the work—if not the conspiracy—of foreigners. Stephen Schlesinger's *Act of Creation* reminds us in vivid detail that the UN was as American in conception and construction as San Francisco itself.³ His is the first book to supply a reasonably scholarly account of what actually happened in San Francisco between 25 April and 25 June 1945, about which there has been a fifty-year silence, even in the huge, diverse academic world of the United States.

Part of the reason why the Conference at San Francisco has not attracted much research is because so many of the key decisions on the new body had already been settled between the major powers, at the Dumbarton Oaks conference in September 1944 and at Yalta the following February. Yet an effect of this neglect has been that scholarly treatments of the whole course of the UN project, from the earliest Rooseveltian planning for the post-war world through to San Francisco itself, remain lacking. Schlesinger has now given us a fairly thorough treatment—there are gaps—of the proceedings in California, but his book is otherwise a somewhat shallow work, lacking any real historical perspective on the

¹ See Robert Beisner, 'Wrong from the Beginning', *Weekly Standard*, 17 March 2003.

² Douglas Brinkley, *Dean Acheson. The Cold War Years, 1953–1971*, New Haven 1992, p. 304.

³ Beisner, 'Wrong from the Beginning'. Pasvol'sky, violently anti-Bolshevik, liked to boast he had debated with Trotsky in New York in 1916.

⁴ *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations*, Boulder 2003.

calculations of the Great Powers that determined its outcome. In that respect, it bears no comparison with Robert Hilderbrand's classic study of the negotiations at Dumbarton Oaks.⁵ More general discussions of wartime American planning have not focused strongly on the UN strand within Roosevelt's strategy. Gabriel Kolko's *The Politics of War*, published almost forty years ago, thus still remains the indispensable, and almost the only complete guide to the whole picture.

FDR expansionism

Roosevelt was well equipped to develop the grand strategy required by the United States, once it was clear that Stalingrad had settled the military outcome of the Second World War. Fascinated by international politics from his youth, he studied Mahan enthusiastically at school and accumulated a personal library of books on naval warfare while at Harvard. A fierce admirer of his cousin Theodore Roosevelt, whose niece Eleanor he married, FDR followed quite consciously in the footsteps of his outspokenly expansionist relative. His political career began with what, for an American of his generation, was a crucial school in military strategy: the Navy Department, where he became Assistant Secretary in 1912. There he was a Big Navy man, pushing for a fleet to rival Britain's. In 1914, he looked forward to all-out war with Mexico to 'clean up the political mess' occasioned by the Mexican Revolution. In that same year he declared: 'Our national defence must extend all over the western hemisphere, must go out a thousand miles into the sea, must embrace the Philippines and over the seas wherever our commerce may be.'⁶ Contemptuous of his superior, Navy Secretary Daniels, a pacific Methodist from North Carolina, he chafed to thrust America into the First World War.

At the end of that war Roosevelt backed Wilson on the League of Nations, but also—positioning himself to shape the Democratic Party's thinking on foreign policy—wanted to beef up American military power. Once installed in the Presidency, he sent Sumner Welles to crush the revolution of 1933 and install Batista's dictatorship in Cuba, pampered clients like Somoza in Nicaragua and—mindful of the need for Catholic

⁵ *Dumbarton Oaks. The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security*, Chapel Hill 1990.

⁶ Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945*, New York 1979, p. 9.

votes at home—took care to assist Franco by embargoing arms to the Spanish Republic during the Civil War. Fascism had few terrors for him. Relations with Mussolini were excellent; Vichy a normal diplomatic partner. Nazi Germany, on the other hand, ~~and~~—although unwilling to offer any shelter to Jewish refugees—viewed as the resurgence of an unmitigated expansionist menace; much as did Churchill, also of First World War naval background. Thus once fighting broke out in Europe, and even before the us had entered the war, the Roosevelt Administration was already looking ahead to a new, American-led world beyond it.

Any grand design for us global dominance had to address one fundamental problem: how to restructure American domestic politics for such an external role. Wilson had been defeated by this challenge, but the configuration of domestic political forces had shifted by the end of the 1930s. In the first place, the dominant sectors of the American business class were now overwhelmingly wedded to the idea of us global leadership. The rise of Wilkie amongst Republicans and Dewey's candidacy against Roosevelt (advised by John Foster Dulles) during the war demonstrated the new consensus. So too did the important group of Republicans within the Roosevelt Administration itself, among them Stimson, Lovett and McCloy. What this bipartisan coalition of big capital wanted from Roosevelt was an assurance that international expansion would be in safe hands from the point of view of American business. In these quarters the brand of internationalism represented by Vice-President Henry Wallace was judged to be unreliably liberal, so Roosevelt dumped him and picked Harry Truman for his running-mate instead, as a man unlikely to offend conservatives.⁷

But popular isolationism was far from dead in the United States and there was a real danger that, once the war was over, domestic pressures would mount for America to concentrate on solving internal problems. The business-class coalition needed Roosevelt to come up with a commanding response to that—one with a powerful 'moralistic' component, as any mass politics capable of moving millions in a sustained way must have. Much of Roosevelt's effort in preparing domestic opinion for the UN involved building up such an idealistic appeal—without compromising in any way the requirements of an American state dedicated to global power politics and the international expansion of us capitalism. In wartime America there was no material available in the local

⁷ Dallek, *Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, pp. 482–3.

political culture out of which the necessary internal banner for the nation's assumption of world leadership could have been woven, other than an updated variant of Wilsonian internationalism. Subsequent critics of Roosevelt's pieties about the UN would have preferred a different moralistic substance: not the lofty ethical appeal of a new and supposedly peaceful world order, but the more down-to-earth one of a robust anti-Communism. But that was not an option available for Roosevelt during the war, when continued military and diplomatic alliance with the Soviet Union appeared essential to victory.

In resolving its task, the Roosevelt Administration hit upon a fundamental insight: that international institutions could be constructed to face simultaneously in two radically different directions. One face would be turned in the direction of mass popular politics, both within the US and internationally. This would be the inspiring ethical face, offering promise of a better world. But simultaneously, the internal face of the organization could be shaped in an entirely different and indeed opposite way, as a framework for the power politics of the hegemon. Moreover—this was the key to success in setting up the UN—the two would not be in tension: the moralistic mask could both conceal and strengthen the inner countenance of the institution. Far from being an attempt to escape from the realities of great-power politics, Roosevelt's scheme for the UN was his way of confronting and pursuing them.

Great-power directorate

From the start, Roosevelt was committed to wrapping the UN Wilsonian banners around an inner structure shaped as a breathtaking dictatorship by a handful of great powers. On this, he never wavered. The new organization would give negligible power to its ordinary member states in the General Assembly: a sharp break from the League of Nations rules. Even the narrower 'executive committee', combining great powers and other member states, was for Roosevelt to be largely impotent. All executive power should be concentrated in the hands of a few permanent states. The chief problem for Roosevelt was how to ensure that, within this directorate, America should dominate.

Here Roosevelt confronted problems from both Churchill and Stalin. In many ways, his problems with Stalin over the new structure were easier to handle than those with Churchill. Initially, Roosevelt conceived

the post-war directorate as a triarchy of the USA, UK and USSR; or as Hilderbrand dryly terms it, a modern version of the *Dreikaiserbund* of Bismarck's day. This notion, when put to him in Teheran, was eminently palatable to Stalin. But as victory neared, Roosevelt talked increasingly of the lofty goal of bringing the peoples of the earth together in a common assembly. For this Stalin had no enthusiasm. His priorities were essentially local and practical: he was determined that the outcome of the war must provide absolutely dependable arrangements for the geopolitical security of the Soviet state. But now he had reason to fear that his partner might be drifting away from earlier understandings. For by the time the design of the UN was being thrashed out at Dumbarton Oaks, Hilderbrand notes, 'the Americans had turned away from regionalism, the principle by which the Kremlin expected to be given authority over its nearest neighbours, in favour of a universalistic approach that might open the way for the West to meddle in the Soviet sphere'.⁸

On sensing this change, Stalin set out to ensure that the new global body should be designed in such a way that it could not be used as a machinery for lining up states for a confrontation with the USSR. There were obvious difficulties in securing such safeguards for Moscow. Stalin could see the reality: the membership of the new organization would have a stack of states from the Western Hemisphere, brigaded under American control; and another stack from the British Empire, under UK control. So the USSR could easily be isolated on all the bodies and committees of the new organization. Stalin's first response was to demand that all Soviet republics be made members.

This caused panic in Washington, where the administration well knew it would never be accepted by US public opinion. But since Roosevelt had no intention of giving the membership significant powers in any case, it was not such a major issue. He convinced Stalin to confine himself to the award of just two extra seats—for Ukraine and Belorussia—in the General Assembly. At Yalta the US and Britain approved this concession in principle, while insisting that the actual decision on it would have to be taken by the San Francisco conference. More intractable was Stalin's requirement that the Great Powers be given a sweeping veto over all issues of substance and procedure in the new organization. This the US resisted, arguing that any such state that was directly engaged in a

⁸ Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, p. 215.

dispute with another state should not have voting rights on it, and that the veto should be restricted to policy, not procedural issues.

Centralization or regional spheres

Britain posed a comparable problem. According to Cordell Hull, Churchill wanted the UN to have a regionalized structure with a Council of the Americas, a Council of Europe and a Council of East Asia—leaving South Asia, the Middle East and Africa (that is, the bulk of the British Empire) splendidly unregulated.⁹ This scheme had its attractions for Roosevelt. It catered to Washington's determination to retain its grip on Central and South America, while implying no exclusion of the US from either Europe or East Asia. American power would be firmly implanted in Germany, and could use the mantle of UN trusteeship to establish bases in the Mediterranean, West Africa, Indochina, Korea and Formosa. While gratifying US needs, the regionalist conception would also, Churchill calculated, provide the best defence of the Empire and of a British leadership role in Europe.

If Roosevelt had opted for a post-war strategy of off-shore balancing at each end of Eurasia, Churchill's plan would have had its attractions. A loose regionalist arrangement would enable the US to 'stand above' local quarrels in Europe or the Far East, while being able to intervene as necessary from its bases to prevent hostile coalitions from forming. But after some hesitations, Roosevelt rejected Churchill's scheme and came down instead for a centralized structure under a global great-power directorate. His Secretary of State Cordell Hull, obsessed with the idea of a free-trade order (opening the world's markets to American industry), was determined to sweep away all regionalist 'spheres of influence' which could block his rather narrowly trade-centred vision. Discussing the danger of such blocs, Pasvolksy—after committing the faux pas of reminding his boss that the Japanese had described their Co-Prosperity Sphere as a Monroe Doctrine for Asia—went so far as to observe that 'if we ask for the privilege, everybody else will', which would 'push the Soviets into a combine' of their own, a prospect to be thwarted.¹⁰ Roosevelt was sympathetic to such considerations and also knew that Hull spoke for powerful forces in the Congress. In any case, FDR calculated, he could make a centralized structure work best for American interests.

⁹ *Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, New York 1948, vol. II, p. 1640.

¹⁰ Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, p. 248.

His key move to ensure American dominance within a global directorate was to play the China card. Not three, but 'Four Policemen' would keep order round the world, he explained. Before producing this rabbit from a hat, he had made sure that Chiang Kai-Shek's hopelessly venal and demoralized regime—then reduced to a rump in Chungking—would play the game loyally as an American client. That made two votes out of four. So far as Britain went, it was clear that London would be critically resource-dependent on American military and financial power for a very long time, once hostilities ceased. That could turn two votes into three on all issues crucial to Washington. What then of the Soviet Union? At this stage, Washington's overwhelming priority was to expand American power and business across the capitalist world. This was the great structural goal confronting the White House at the time, not swallowing the USSR whole. Three votes in the directorate, plus respect for Soviet geopolitical security concerns, looked as if it would be a formula that could work.

Churchill, however, was alarmed and outraged by Roosevelt's plan when he learnt of it in October 1942. He repeatedly referred to 'the United States with her faggot-vote China' and had no trouble detecting the connexion between the Chinese ploy, a centralized vision of the UN and American designs on the British Empire. The 'pig-tails' Roosevelt was trying to foist on the Big Three 'would be a faggot vote on the side of the United States in any attempt to liquidate the British overseas Empire'.¹¹ Eden sought to head Roosevelt off by warning that China might 'have to go through a revolution after the war'.¹² When Roosevelt would not budge, Churchill launched a long battle for a 'faggot vote' of his own in the unlikely shape—given his feelings about De Gaulle—of France, whose own empire he resolved to see rebuilt after the war, to check American designs on Indochina, Tunisia and Senegal.

¹¹ Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War. The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-1945*, New York 1968, pp. 266-7. Churchill's phrase had no homophobic meaning. Originally a term for someone temporarily hired to make up a deficiency at a military muster, by the early 19th century faggots were a bundle of votes (as in sticks) manufactured for party purposes through the transfer to persons not otherwise legally qualified of sufficient property to make them electors, by sub-dividing a single tenement among a number of nominal owners. In Churchill's youth *The Times* was still (1887) publishing articles on 'The Question of Faggot-voting'.

¹² Dallek, *Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, pp. 389-90.

Roosevelt resisted vigorously, maintaining diplomatic relations with the Vichy regime long after D-Day in 1944, and still rejecting any recognition of De Gaulle's administration in France as late as September 1944, when the 'Big Four' were negotiating the structure of the UN at Dumbarton Oaks in Georgetown—a gathering that itself had to be split into two conferences because the Russians would not sit down with a Chinese government that had not yet declared war on Germany. Even when Roosevelt had finally abandoned Vichy and recognised De Gaulle's government, Washington dragged its heels on full French recognition as part of a Big Five. De Gaulle, who had little reason to trust the patronage of Churchill, gained no seat at Yalta. Even as the San Francisco conference assembled, his treatment by Washington tempted him to lead a revolt against Dumbarton Oaks and refuse to take his seat as a permanent member of the Security Council. But at San Francisco itself, the French relented and joined the Big Five, while the Americans were constrained to abandon their plans for breaking off bits of the French Empire as suitable locations for American bases.

The Rooseveltian model

Despite these growling power struggles, Roosevelt's dedication in the last months and weeks of his life to the project of the United Nations kept up sufficient domestic and international momentum to ensure that in the months after his death San Francisco gave birth to a body which was, in all essentials, the one which he and his collaborators had designed. It was an ingenious piece of institutional engineering. The UN package possessed, from the start, two banners inherited from the League. The first was its claim to cosmopolitan scope. This was only a promise in San Francisco, since the Axis powers were excluded and the European Empires were still not destroyed. But over time, thanks to post-war reconstruction in Germany and Japan, and decolonization in Asia and Africa, the UN would greatly surpass the League in scale and standing. The second banner was renewed dedication to peace and the resolution of armed conflicts. There was much else in the declaratory rhetoric of the Charter, and a host of specialized UN agencies eventually would come into being, but these two banners were and remain the major symbols of the world body.

At the founding conference the second was the most visible since, as noted, the first still had an element of political conditionality attached to it: not only Germany and Japan but any powers still their allies, and

even pro-Axis neutrals were not allowed to attend. Schlesinger explains that the UN logo, showing a map of the globe within a wreath of flowers, was carefully designed to exclude Argentina from view because of its friendship with Nazi Germany. The Truman Administration's determination to bring Argentina in anyway enabled Molotov to make a modest propaganda gain in San Francisco, as much of the American press criticized the White House for Machiavellianism. But the deliberate tying of UN cosmopolitanism to the Allied coalition has nonetheless marked the body ever since; most obviously in the composition of the Big Five and the exclusion of Germany and Japan from their ranks.

At the same time, San Francisco's declaration of the principle of the sovereign equality of states, and openness to the potential membership of all nations, carried the appealing message that it might one day gather within it representatives from the peoples of the entire world. This has given the UN a unique kind of popular aura: not of political democracy, let alone social justice, but simply of planetary inclusiveness. There was never any question of world government here: the Roosevelt administration had always vigorously opposed all those who pressed for even an embryo of that. But its ethnic span has always given the UN a potent if nebulous patina of authority. This in turn has strengthened its continuing role as a focal point for diplomacy in zones of incipient or actual armed conflict almost anywhere in the world. Protagonists either on one side or on both have consistently sought to use the UN as a platform for efforts to gain support for their cause—just as the United States has also fairly consistently used it as a body on which to dump responsibility for managing or containing conflicts in which the US itself identifies no pressing American strategic interest.

If such were the normative promises it offered, the Rooseveltian package simultaneously sought to ensure that the UN could in no way become an obstacle to the pursuit of US global strategy. The cosmopolitan ideal was gutted by giving the General Assembly no significant policy-making power whatever. Decision-making authority was concentrated in a Security Council without the slightest claim to rest on any representative principle other than brute force. This radical break between the scope of the Assembly and the unaccountable oligarchy of the Security Council was, indeed, a topic of interminable debate in the Roosevelt Administration. Roosevelt himself was by instinct at the extreme end of the power-political spectrum, inclined to grant a complete diktat to

the Four Policemen without much effort at a fig-leaf. He toyed with the idea of adding Brazil to them, as another liegeman of the us, but was dissuaded by his subordinates. He was persuaded instead to bring six other states, elected in rotation by the General Assembly as a whole (not by regions, as urged by Sumner Welles) onto the Security Council, essentially as window-dressing for the arbitrary prerogatives of his quartet of planetary gendarmes. Their sweeping veto powers could be counted on to render the elected members impotent and any representative principle void.

Orchestrating the birth

Such was the situation as delegates from 46 countries arrived in San Francisco in April 1945 to put the finishing touches to the broad outlines of the UN that had been devised by the us at Dumbarton Oaks, and refined in Washington over the following months. Roosevelt had died a fortnight earlier. His last Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, former chairman of us Steel, was dispatched—reluctantly—by Truman to preside over the proceedings. Stephen Schlesinger's book provides a graphic account of the complete American control of the occasion. Suitably enough, plenary sessions were staged in the Opera House, where the delegates sat like so many spectators of a Broadway musical—the auditorium having been transformed for the occasion by a designer of these. Four gold pillars tied together with olive branches, a semi-circle of flags aloft pike-staffs, twenty-four spotlights 'with blue filters for cosmetic effect', and an off-stage band playing martial music adorned the première. More humdrum affairs were attended to by specialized committees in the Veterans' Building nearby. If these were settings suggestive of passivity and impotence, no such connotations attached to Stettinius's penthouse in the Fairmont Hotel, which saw the real action as the other Great Powers were summoned to confer with their host.

Meanwhile, in the Army base in the old Spanish Presidio a few miles away, us military intelligence was systematically intercepting all cable traffic by the delegates to their home countries, whose decoded messages landed on Stettinius's breakfast table; while the FBI kept track of their movements in the city—as well as, of course, anti-colonial lobbies and other subversive groups congregating round the conference. Much of what was snooped on remains blacked out in transcripts even

today.¹³ Comprehensive surveillance of the foreign delegates (and even some from the us) was accompanied by the beguilements of American wealth and glamour. Already at the much more select gathering of Dumbarton Oaks, Stettinius had taken British and Soviet negotiators secretly to the flesh-pots of Manhattan (the midnight floor-show at the Diamond Horseshoe night-club, Katherine Hepburn at Radio City, cock-tails with Nelson Rockefeller) and the stately homes of Virginia (mint juleps on the terrace while Stettinius held forth on the beauties of the scene—in the words of a British colleague, ‘as if he not only owned it but had painted it’).¹⁴ In San Francisco, Hollywood movies were shown daily free of charge in a special UN viewing theatre, while aerial tours of the Bay Area by blimp, marine excursions in Coast Guard cutters, special consignments of scotch, bourbon, champagne, rum, brandy and cigarettes, and many a dazzling reception were laid on to similar effect.

Amidst this bombardment of attractions, the conference resolved itself into two main issues. The first was the position the Soviet Union would occupy within the emergent structure designed to encase American global power, as Roosevelt had conceived it. Molotov and Gromyko arrived with briefs unchanged from Dumbarton Oaks. The veto powers of the permanent members of the Security Council must encompass matters not only of substance but of procedure, since—as Gromyko pointed out—nothing was easier than for the second to slide rapidly towards the first. Ostensibly, a homeric battle was engaged on this issue, the American press agog at the prospect of the conference failing through deadlock over it. In reality, Stalin’s thoughts were concentrated on securing Western assent to Soviet control of post-war Poland, where he had swiftly installed a satellite regime, to the indignation of Republican senators and much of the us press and public opinion.

Truman, often thought to have been a more principled anti-Communist than Roosevelt, committed to a firmer line against totalitarian usurpation in Eastern Europe, did not hesitate. To cut the Gordian knot over the scope

¹³ ‘The military man in charge of the San Francisco eavesdropping and code-breaking operation indicated his own sense of accomplishment: “Pressure of work has at last abated and the 24-hour day has shortened. The feeling in the Branch is that the success of the Conference may owe a great deal to its contribution”’: Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, p. 331.

¹⁴ Later, ‘the cavalcade arrived at Stettinius’s home, *Horseshoe*, where the party ate a buffet supper and were entertained by a negro quartet singing spirituals’: Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, pp. 82–83.

of veto powers, he dispatched Harry Hopkins to Moscow with instructions to make it clear that 'Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Austria (*sic*), Yugoslavia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, et al (*re-sic*), make no difference to us interests'—adding, with cynicism that outdid any aside by Roosevelt, that an election in Poland could be as free as Tom Pendergast's in Kansas City or Boss Hague's in Chicago.¹⁵ With this assurance from the 'heroic' little democrat from Missouri in his pocket, Stalin dropped opposition to the American version of the veto with a wave of his hand, dismissing it as an insignificant matter. The founding conference of the UN ended with a Soviet retreat on every major point of contention. The hard-liners in the US delegation—Republican Senator Vandenberg in the lead—had every reason to be jubilant.

What explains the ease of this American victory at San Francisco? Essentially, Stalin accorded far more importance to his control of Eastern Europe than to the structure of the new global institutions and, to gain the acceptance he wanted for the one, yielded any significant say over the other. For all his legendary lack of scruple, he was a naive and provincial politician outside the wintry recesses of the CPSU in which he had built his empire. Easily fooled by Hitler, impressed even by Chiang-Kai Shek, the 'Marshal' was flattered and lulled by Roosevelt into believing the war-time alliance might become a peaceable division of spheres after the war—in which Stalin seriously thought only of a glacis to his West, contenting himself with the merest crumbs in the East: the Kuriles, exclusion from the occupation in Japan, and renunciation of half of Korea. Not a Soviet soldier was allowed to set foot in Rome, while Berlin was surrendered to joint Allied control without US or British troops having taken an inch of it. Once he had physically secured Eastern Europe—albeit with the gaping hole of West Berlin—what Stalin essentially sought was Anglo-American acceptance of the facts on the ground, for which he was quite prepared to sacrifice any independent stake in the construction of the UN, clinging to the belief that veto powers would neutralize any danger from it.

Roosevelt, though not immune to self-deception himself—he too vaguely believed that good relations between Moscow and Washington could continue after the war, if not on an equal footing—had altogether wider horizons. American power was global, not regional, and required an

¹⁵ Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, pp. 213, xvii.

institutional framework to fit it. The UN that Stalin allowed him to construct in due course fulfilled the original Soviet fears. Over the next half century, it is difficult to think of a single material benefit the USSR derived from the institution in which, to adapt Hilderbrand's phrase, the Soviets soon 'found themselves feeling increasingly isolated and vulnerable, truly the black sheep in the family of nations'.¹⁶

On the other hand, Roosevelt's conception of the UN did not survive the next years intact either. The most revealing sections of Schlesinger's book lie in the evidence it provides that the first pointers towards an alternative political framework for American hegemony, including the UN but extending beyond it, were put in place at the San Francisco conference. Orthodox accounts of the origins of Acheson's grand strategy explain its emergence as the result of an increasingly conflictual evolution of relations between the US and the USSR. Some within this orthodoxy blame the Soviet Union for the rising tensions, others the Truman Administration. But there is another way of looking at the turn Acheson gave US foreign policy—one that stressed not collective security organizations for world peace (in which no one is, in principle, an enemy unless they break the rules), but bilateral security alliances built on friend-enemy lines, from the start—which points to an underlying ambiguity in Roosevelt's vision of the form that American hegemony should take.

Rockefeller's role

For while the bulk of the Roosevelt Administration was preoccupied with fighting a war and preparations to anchor American dominance through a collective security organization, the sector which handled Latin American affairs under the leadership of Nelson Rockefeller was involved in neither of these. Here there was no war to be fought, and the organizational construction in which Rockefeller was engaged was that of a hegemonic security alliance, based on friend-foe principles. Rockefeller had been Co-ordinator of Inter-American affairs in the Administration since 1940, where one of his major goals was, as he put it in an official memorandum, 'to lessen the dependence of Latin America upon Europe as a market for raw materials and a source of manufactured articles', not least by acquiring British assets in the region. As another official memo noted, there were 'good properties in

¹⁶ Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, p. 254.

the British portfolio' in Latin America and 'we might as well pick them up now', though there was also 'a lot of trash which Britain should be allowed to keep'.¹⁷ To this end, Rockefeller had constructed co-ordinating committees in each Latin American country. As a senior American diplomat explained in a letter to Rockefeller's boss, the Under Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, the committees were 'composed of the biggest businessmen', including Standard Oil, Guggenheim, GM and United Fruit. 'They have very definite ideas as to what our general policy should be, and in general their ideas have been the most reactionary'.¹⁸

Such was Rockefeller's success in this work that in November 1944 he was promoted to become Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs. In early 1945 he organized an Inter-American conference in Chapultepec, Mexico City, to formalize us dominance in the region through a military-security alliance. Formally, the Chapultepec Pact committed the us to defend the states of the region from external aggression; in practice its aim was to protect pro-American regimes from internal subversion, in exchange for us access to whatever resources it wanted in the various states involved.

But Rockefeller's activity in Chapultepec raised fierce opposition from the State Department's international division, because it contradicted the Dumbarton Oaks principle that all international disputes should be handled by the UN. There was a further problem with Rockefeller's activism—the kind of political forces he patronized in various Latin American countries. Nicolo Tucci, the head of the Bureau of Latin American Research in the State Department, resigned, declaring that 'my bureau was supposed to undo the Nazi and Fascist propaganda in South America but Rockefeller is inviting the worst fascists and Nazis to Washington'.¹⁹

Rockefeller, however, won on Chapultepec and, despite the fact that he was not included in the American delegation at San Francisco, turned up there anyway and became one of the most powerful figures at the conference, for the simple reason that he, rather than the head of the us delegation, his formal superior Stettinius, had the loyalty of the Latin American delegations, whose votes had decisive weight. Rockefeller took care of every need of the Latin American bloc, ordering the us Navy to do

¹⁷ Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *The Rockefellers. An American Dynasty*, New York 1976, p. 230.

¹⁸ *The Rockefellers*, p. 233.

¹⁹ *The Rockefellers*, p. 236.

its laundry and caucusing regularly to work out common lines on conference issues. Rockefeller had even closer relations with the FBI than did his own Secretary of State. He told the FBI's chief agent at the conference that he, Rockefeller, was to be the conduit for FBI reports destined for Stettinius. The FBI obliged, passing all its material on to Rockefeller, despite the fact that he had no official role in San Francisco. Stettinius never discovered this link.²⁰

The first problem to explode was Argentina, with its unvarnished pro-Fascist government. Rockefeller's Latin American caucus insisted that it be allowed to join the UN. It further warned that unless Argentina was seated, the Latin Americans would block seats for Ukraine and Belorussia, thus threatening a large, public split with the Soviet Union. Stettinius found himself obliged to agree. Next, and much more serious for core UN principles, was Rockefeller's drive to ensure that the conference accept the Chapultepec Pact, despite the fact that Washington had been campaigning for a centralized world body, ending regional spheres of influence.

Stettinius tried to fight Rockefeller on this and the result was the most serious internal dispute within the American delegation at San Francisco. Rockefeller cleverly enlisted Vandenberg's support, to the fury of the Senator's adviser, John Foster Dulles, a key figure in the bi-partisan conclaves in the Fairmont Hotel. The War Department became involved and McCloy flew in from Washington to tackle what he called the 'have our cake and eat it too' issue: in other words ensuring that Washington controlled the Western Hemisphere while simultaneously being free to intervene in Europe. McCloy favoured the Rockefeller position and telephoned Stimson, who concurred that, 'It's not asking too much'. The pair also accepted that Russia should have its security belt in Eastern Europe—a sphere of influence of its own.²¹

Rockefeller therefore won the battle with Stettinius and a vague form of words was agreed in Article 51 of the Charter that allowed individual or collective self-defence at a regional level. Later Dulles would recognize what he called the 'incalculable value' of Rockefeller's intervention. In the 1950s, finding himself sitting next to Rockefeller at a dinner, he declared: 'I owe you an apology. If you fellows hadn't done it, we

²⁰ Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, p. 87.

²¹ Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men*, New York 1986, pp. 275–6.

might never have had NATO.²² Striking enough, in a sense this remark by Dulles nevertheless betrays his narrowly legalistic cast of mind. The real significance of Rockefeller's activity in Latin America and at San Francisco went much deeper. He was offering a political model of how to organize American global power, in part alternative and in part complementary to the Rooseveltian model of the UN: the outlines of a capitalist world subordinated to the United States through a system of friend-enemy alliances centred on anti-Communism. This was the acorn Rockefeller planted in San Francisco that would eventually become Acheson's oak.

From Dulles to Huntington

If Paul Nitze is to be believed, Dulles never quite grasped Acheson's idea in its full political sense. Nitze, Acheson's assistant in designing the new American-centred world order at the end of the 1940s, explained his differences with Dulles in a piece called 'Coalition Policy and the Concept of World Order' which he contributed to a book by Arnold Wolfers at the end of the 1950s.²³ In this, Nitze explained that there were two schools of thought on Cold War alliances. One was that these were generated by the need to protect American and allied security against the hostile power of the 'Soviet-Chinese communist bloc'. Of this school, he said, 'Mr. Dulles is sometimes but not always a member'. But, he went on, there was a second school of thought, to which he himself adhered. This held that:

United States foreign policy is, or should be, positive and not merely negative and defensive. It maintains that United States interests and United States security have become directly dependent on the creation and maintenance of some form of world order compatible with our continued development as the kind of nation we are.

This positive effort, explained Nitze, which began in 1946 and continued through to its completion in 1953, centred on the construction of a system of regional alliances. This machinery of power, he acknowledged, did have 'its world-wide aspects geared into the United Nations structure'—but only in one field. This was economics, where the IMF and the World Bank were vital.

²² Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, p. 174.

²³ Arnold Wolfers, ed., *Alliance Policy in the Cold War*, Baltimore 1959.

Nitze's conception was later spelt out more bluntly by Samuel Huntington:

Throughout the two decades after World War Two, the power of the United States Government in world politics, and its interests in developing a system of alliances with other governments against the Soviet Union, China and communism, produced the underlying political condition which made the rise of [business] transnationalism possible. Western Europe, Latin America, East Asia and much of South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa fell within what was euphemistically referred to as 'the Free World', and what was in fact a security zone. The governments of countries within this zone found it in their interests: (a) to accept an explicit or implicit guarantee by Washington of the independence of their country and, in some cases, of the authority of the government; and (b) to permit access to their territory by a variety of us governmental and non-governmental organisations pursuing goals which those organisations considered important . . . The 'Pax Americana', as I. F. Stone put it, 'is the "internationalism" of Standard Oil, Chase Manhattan, and the Pentagon.'⁴⁴

In such a world order, whatever the roles of the UN and its various agencies, they could be no more than ancillary within the political structures of American primacy.

Staging the finale

The San Francisco Conference ended in fitting style, with a last-minute gala thrown by Nelson Rockefeller in the St Francis Yacht Club, 'highlighted by the appearance of Carmen Miranda, "the Brazilian Bombshell", to celebrate the wind-up'.⁴⁵ This was followed by a splendidly choreographed finale in the Opera House, klieg lights blazing over a décor of luxurious props in various shades of blue, a flow chart to track the movement of delegates, rehearsals of each signature of the Charter in a hidden room behind the stage, and last-minute manoeuvres to prevent Argentina from leading the otherwise alphabetical parade of signatories.⁴⁶ As soon as the ceremony was completed, 'armed guards

⁴⁴ Samuel Huntington, 'Transnational Organizations in World Politics', *World Politics*, April 1973.

⁴⁵ *Act of Creation*, p. 243. Rockefeller went on to sell the Manhattan real estate on which the General Assembly was built to the fledgling world organization.

⁴⁶ *Act of Creation*, pp. 243, 251-7. This was not the only diplomatic *contre-temps*. When Truman arrived for the ceremony, Stettinius held an all-American banquet for him in his Fairmont penthouse, recounting the meetings of the Big Five and their seating arrangements in the jovially anecdotal style of a tour guide with

rushed the Charter upstairs and placed it in a seventy-five-pound fire-proof safe'. The precious cargo was then transported in a special Army plane—wrapped in its own parachute in case of mishap—to Washington by no less a personage than Alger Hiss, the Secretary-General of the Conference. Expecting a corresponding full-dress reception on delivering it to the White House, Hiss was mortified to find the President relaxing in his shirt-sleeves, a shot of bourbon in hand, indifferent to the majesty of the new Covenant in its Ark of combination-locked steel.

The aftermath of the Conference was no less symbolic. Where the League had been killed off in the US Senate, the UN was greeted ecstatically on Capitol Hill, where the assembled legislators sped its ratification through with almost indecent haste—of the 49 signatories to the Treaty only Somoza's Nicaragua and El Salvador beat them to the punch. There were only two dissenting votes. Senator Vandenberg, who could fairly count himself one of the architects of success in the Opera House, gave a stem-winding performance—'I am prepared to proceed with the great adventure. I see no other way. I believe it will bless the earth', etc—in the course of which he allowed that people might say that some signatories 'practise the precise opposite of what they preach even as they sign'; but 'I reply the nearer right you may be in any such gloomy indictment, the greater is the need for the new pattern which promises to stem these evil tides . . . the nearer right you are, the greater is the urgency for invoking the emancipations which the San Francisco Charter contemplates'.²⁷ No better maxim for the characteristic hypocrisies of the UN could have been found: the more brutal and cynical the conduct of its dominant powers, the more essential to 'invoke' and 'contemplate' the balm of its uplifting principles. The fate of Stettinius, unceremoniously jettisoned by Truman within days of completing his mission in San Francisco, was a more candid barometer of the actual status assigned to the UN in American grand designs in the coming years. Throughout the Cold War, US global strategy proceeded along Achesonian lines.

Schlesinger's book exults that the creation of the UN was 'from the beginning, a project of the United States, devised by the State Department,

sight-seers. The only woman on the US delegation, the high-minded Virginia Gildersleeve—a figure out of J. K. Rowling—complained of this 'international bad manners' and 'scandalous breach of etiquette'. It is to Virginia, keen on education and human rights, that we owe the most sonorous strophes of the Charter.

²⁷ *Act of Creation*, p. 266.

expertly guided by two hands-on Presidents, and propelled by us power'. He makes no bones of the fact that in San Francisco, 'Stettinius was presiding over an enterprise his nation was already dominating and moulding'.²⁸ In his eyes, the result was a magnificent feat—'for a nation rightly proud of its innumerable accomplishments, this unique achievement should always be at the top of its illustrious roster', and other peoples owe gratitude to Americans for having bestowed it on them. 'The United Nations', he exclaims, 'might eventually turn out to be the most resplendent gift the United States has given the world'.²⁹ Is this disarming vision—America's supreme gift to humanity the outcome of its domination over it—historically realistic?

A more advanced agenda

Given the fact that the Rooseveltian design did ensure us dominance over the politics of the capitalist world (with veto-protections for the USSR), it might seem odd that American leaders should have found the organization insufficient as the principal instrument of us hegemony. A clue can be found in another of Acheson's remarks about the world body. He claimed that the UN was a nineteenth-century idea. This was clearly an exaggeration, but his meaning was surely that its conception belonged to an epoch before American hegemony. For the formal *raison d'être* of the UN, like the League before it, was to bring great-power wars amongst (capitalist) states to an end, by laying down rules for collective action to stop them. For the British and other satisfied powers of the inter-war years, that was an admirable principle. By then London had grabbed what it wanted—and more—across the globe, and the liberal legalism, so perfectly captured and criticized by E. H. Carr³⁰, that was embodied in the League and made the basis of its jurisprudence, answered to its interests.

This remained at the heart of Roosevelt's conception of the UN, albeit with the Wilsonian amendment for self-determination which helped open up the British and other European empires. Yet the collective security function of defending the status quo against revisionist powers was irrelevant under us hegemony for the simple reason that America, unlike Britain, possessed the resources to impose a *unipolar* control over all the other capitalist powers, both in Western Europe and in East Asia.

²⁸ *Act of Creation*, p. 174.

²⁹ *Act of Creation*, pp. xiii, xviii, 279.

³⁰ E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, London 1946.

In this sense, Acheson was right: the collective security principle was old-fashioned and supererogatory under us hegemony. It basically still addressed what had been the most intractable problem of the Europe-centred world that existed before American dominance.

Of course, for the us to play the role of guardian and manager of the entire core required militarizing the American state on a permanent basis. But that in turn looked as if it might help resolve tricky problems of the domestic political economy. In these conditions, the UN was not only redundant as an instrument for stabilizing relations among the main capitalist centres. From an Achesonian angle, it was worse than redundant because, in the cause of collective political defence of the status quo, it advanced a juridical principle which was, at best, unhelpful: absolute national sovereignty. This again was a principle more attuned to the era of British than of American imperialism. The British never had the capacity to reshape coercively the internal arrangements of other *capitalist* states. Their speciality was taking over and reshaping pre-capitalist societies, defeating traditionalist forces of resistance within them. So the principle of absolute states' rights and non-interference was perfectly acceptable to the British, once they had reached the limits of their empire.

But Washington had a different and more advanced agenda: first, to penetrate existing capitalist states and reorganize their internal arrangements to suit us purposes; and second, to defeat any social forces there that rejected the American path to modernity in the name, not of traditionalism, but of an alternative modernity. The UN model simply did not address these issues which were so central for Washington. Indeed, it offered a notional defence against American interference in its emphasis on national sovereignty. As a result, the UN politico-legal order was a cumbersome obstacle to a great deal of us post-war activity, forcing much of its drive for internal regime-change to be organized covertly. The Achesonian principle of uniting the free (market) world against all resistance—thematized as 'Communism'—to the American way of organizing modern life, made short work of the phraseologies of the UN Charter. Ratcheting up the Soviet threat, it turned the two main centres of capitalism in Eurasia, Western Europe and Japan, into quasi-protectorates of the us—so enabling Washington to rebuild Germany and Japan as the industrial hubs of their respective regions without fear that they might once again develop geopolitical strategies

for re-organizing their regions as rivals to it. Paralysing the UN system, with its prominent symbolic place for the USSR, was thus a necessary component of Achesonian primacy.

After the fall

The first Gulf War of 1991 was as much a false dawn for the post-Cold War UN as Korea had been at the start of the Cold War. In violating the principle of unconditional state sovereignty, Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait enabled the US to exploit the UN to the full for a demonstration of the new reach of American hegemony, as the Soviet Union tottered towards extinction. But now more than ever, the UN's utility to the US in the post-Cold War world required that its core principle of state sovereignty be scrapped. For that principle suggests that states are free to organize their domestic political economies as they wish, whereas the profit streams of American (and much of European, especially British) business depend crucially on internal arrangements in other states that provide unfettered freedom to external financial operators, unfettered rights for foreign companies to buy out domestic concerns and unfettered protection of monopoly rents on intellectual property. The UN Charter guarantees none of this: theoretically, indeed, it works against it.

Thus during the 1990s, the US and its European associates sought to rework the traditional discourse of the UN, arguing that sovereignty was not unconditional, but should be viewed as a revocable licence granted to states by the 'international community', to be issued or withdrawn according to the palatability or otherwise of their internal regime. If a state failed to meet appropriate international standards, blockade or invasion were warranted against it. In constructing this revision, on which a host of jurists and diplomats has laboured, Washington (and London) were able to draw on other strands in UN ideals to good effect. The eclectic repertoire of the Charter itself, with its salmagundi of contradictory clauses, offered a ready antidote to any too narrow insistence on national sovereignty. For, after all, it was also a resonant statement of universal human rights. These were the higher values the time demanded, legitimizing a new 'military humanism' in defence of them. In the Balkans, war could be waged by NATO in the name of both human rights and free markets, with the blessing of the UN Secretary-General, and after-sales service ministered by the Security Council. In the late 1990s, Roosevelt's

original vision of the UN as the central instrument of American global power looked as if it might come alive again, beyond even his expectations, since Russia too could now be numbered among its dependents in a way he could scarcely have imagined at Yalta.

But even this change has not been enough to persuade successive presidents to rely on the UN as their chosen instrument of hegemony. The White House has remained committed to the model of primacy, organized through hub-and-spokes security alliances that make the other main capitalist states dependent for their security on the us. Under the current Republican Administration, however, the geopolitics of Achesonian 'containment' has been turned on its head: instead of protecting the two Eurasian rimlands through a confrontation with the Eurasian heartland, Bush is pushing us power deep into the centre of the heartland—a zone from the Eastern Mediterranean through the Gulf and the Central Asian region up to China's western borders. This internally unstable zone generates anxieties in all the main Eurasian powers. It also holds the energy reserves needed by all of them except Russia. By holding this zone, Washington could hope to gain leverage for an extended version of the primacy it enjoyed in the Cold War, encompassing even its former adversaries in Moscow and Beijing. In that light, a new global cleavage against 'terrorism' offers a much more flexible basis for wide-ranging interventionism than any legal formula the UN Secretariat, however good-willing, could provide.

Were this prospect to materialize, the UN would be slotted into the framework of American hegemony as an auxiliary machinery once again, as in the days of the Cold War, but this time with the other four permanent members of the Security Council firmly subordinated to us directives—an awesome engine of world dictatorship. If it is frustrated, Washington can at least be sure that there is no chance of any other forces being able to use the UN as an effective check on the predatory instincts of the us and its British side-kick. For many years, the only vetoes actually cast in the Security Council have been American.

Bush's 'unilateralism' represents the revival of a global cleavage structure of friend-enemy relations, with a new set of security alliances and greatly expanded basing arrangements to match. To allies grown accustomed to the conventions of the nineties, this has come as quite a shock. But, even if more precariously, the Rooseveltian framework still

holds. After the most brazen of all American wars in violation of the UN Charter, every hand in the Security Council—some eagerly, others more sullenly—has gone up to endorse the puppet authority installed by the conquerors, ratifying their conquest.³¹

The Iraqi *maquis*, capable of hitting not only the us and uk occupiers but their UN collaborators too, has nevertheless shaken the confidence of the 'international community' in the hegemon. Secretary-General Annan has even been moved to tell the world that 'one has to be careful not to confuse the UN with the us', as if such an error could ever have occurred under his stewardship.³² But there is little sign as yet that much is likely to change within the United Nations. Any real reform of it would probably require—as Danilo Zolo, its most acute critic, has intimated³³—the withdrawal from the organization of one or several big Third World countries, to force a change in the status and composition of the Security Council, and an unambiguous shift of power to the General Assembly. Only that kind of shock could break the armoured settlement created in 1945. But it is enough to glance at the corrupt or pliant leaderships in the most obvious candidate nations to see how utopian such a prospect remains. For the moment, resistance to American power lies in the alley-ways of Fallujah and Baghdad, not the lobbies of the Upper East Side.

³¹ The Security Council, 16 October 2003: 'welcomes the positive response of the international community to the establishment of the broadly representative Governing Council'; 'supports the Governing Council's efforts to mobilize the people of Iraq'; 'determines that the Governing Council and its ministers are the principal bodies of the Iraqi interim administration, which without prejudice to its further evolution, embodies the sovereignty of the state of Iraq'; 'authorizes a multinational force under unified command to take all measures to contribute to the maintenance of security and stability in Iraq'; and 'requests that the United States on behalf of the multinational force report to the Security Council on the efforts and progress of this force'. Signed: France, Russia, China, uk, us, Germany, Spain, Bulgaria, Chile, Mexico, Guinea, Cameroon, Angola, Pakistan, Syria. Compare the seating of Pol Pot's representatives in the UN for fourteen years after his regime was overthrown by the DRV.

³² *Financial Times*, 22 August 2003.

³³ *Cosmopolis*, Cambridge 1997, p. 170. This work and its sequel, *Invoking Humanity. War, Law, and Global Order*, are the best critical appraisals of the United Nations to date.

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FRANCISCO DE OLIVEIRA

In a national culture of notable variety and depth, the sociologist Chico de Oliveira has been one of Brazil's most original thinkers. A North-Easterner, he was born in 1933, in Recife, and educated there. At the age of 24 he joined SUDENE, the regional state development agency, working as deputy to Celso Furtado, the country's most famous economist. Both were driven into exile by the military dictatorship which came to power in the coup of 1964. Abroad, de Oliveira worked for the UN in Guatemala and Mexico, before returning to Brazil in 1970, where he found employment with the social-science foundation CEBRAP in São Paulo. He later held chairs in sociology at both State and Catholic universities. In 1972 he published an iconoclastic reassessment of accepted theories of Brazilian economic development, under the title Critique of Dualist Reason. In this he took his distance from Furtado's legacy, as well as more generally the intellectual tradition of CEPAL, the UN's Economic Commission on Latin America, whose presiding spirit was Raúl Prebisch.

Politically, de Oliveira had been a militant of Brazil's small, but not uninfluential, Socialist Party before 1964. Under the gradual 'opening' of dictatorship in the late seventies, he helped to found the Workers' Party (PT), in which he remains active to this day. With democratization, his mordant analyses of the political scene and the forces manoeuvring across it attracted increasing attention. Roberto Schwarz has described his essays of this period as 'always surprising'—'trenchant, yet unsectarian', disconcerting both those who felt that sharp formulations were incompatible with social negotiation, and those for whom any level-headed analysis of opposing interests was an invitation to lukewarm compromise. Pointing out how accurate his prognoses of the ill-fated stabilization plan of the Sarney government (1985–90) and of the leprous Collor Presidency (1990–92) proved to be, Schwarz remarks that this kind of far-sightedness has come from an intellectual independence, and distaste for the vulgar and authoritarian strands of Brazilian tradition, that is all the more notable in 'a gregarious culture like ours'. Today, de Oliveira has displayed the same courage, with an acerbic depiction of the aberrant social reality of his country, of which—he argues—his own party now forms an integral part. The essay in question, 'The Duckbilled Platypus', has caused a fierce controversy in Brazil. We publish it below, with the preface by Roberto Schwarz that has accompanied it.

ROBERTO SCHWARZ

PREFACE WITH QUESTIONS

*Venceu o sistema de Babilônia
e o garção de costeleta*

Oswald de Andrade, 1946

THE EPIGRAPH CONDENSES, in caustic mode, the historic disappointment of a libertarian modernist at the postwar outcome. The defeat of Nazism in Europe and the end of the Vargas dictatorship in Brazil had been moments of unusual hope, but they had not opened the door to higher forms of society. So far as we were concerned, victory went to the Babylonian system—that is, capitalism; and to the *maitre dce*—that is, kitsch aesthetics. The social and artistic ferment of the 1920s and 30s had ended in this.

Another historical cycle later, the essays of Francisco de Oliveira—differences of genre aside—trace an analogous anticlimax: the exhaustion of a ‘developmentalism’ that is now ending without having fulfilled its promise. Written thirty years apart, his ‘Critique of Dualist Reason’ (1972) and ‘Duckbilled Platypus’ (2003) represent, respectively, moments of critical intervention and sardonic observation.¹ In one, the intellect clarifies the terms of a struggle against underdevelopment; in the other, it identifies the social monstrosity we have become, and will remain until further notice. The title of the former, of course, alluded to *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, in which Sartre had recently attempted to bring Marxism, revolution and the dialectic itself up to date under the sign of a philosophy of freedom. Today the comparison of our realities with the duckbilled platypus—an animal belonging to no familiar species—underlines the incongruities of Brazilian society, viewed rather as result than as what it might be changed into. The zoographical spirit of the allegory, conceived by a long-standing member of the party at the very moment when the party has won the Presidency of the Republic, gives cause for reflection. The parallel with Oswald brings to mind the

long list of our historic frustrations, from the nineteenth century on, springing from the persistent discrepancy between Brazil and its chosen country-models; and from our continuous hopes of being able to bridge that gap through a visionary social turn.

According to de Oliveira, Brazil's transformation into a social platypus was completed by the forward leap in the forces of production we witness today. Accomplished by others, this has not been easy to replicate. The Third Industrial Revolution is a combination of capitalist globalization with scientific and technical knowledge that is sequestered in patents and subject to accelerated obsolescence; any attempt to acquire or copy it piecemeal is rendered futile. From the national point of view, the desirable course of action would be to incorporate the process in its entirety, but that would require investment in education and infrastructure seemingly beyond the reach of a poor country. In conditions of neo-backwardness, the inherited traits of underdevelopment undergo a supplementary deformation which gives the platypus its particular form.

In the camp of labour, the new balance of forces has eroded rights won in earlier periods. The extraction of surplus value meets less resistance, and capital loses what civilizing effect it might have had. An increasing informalization of work is taking place, as occupations replace jobs and the wage relationship is dismantled. The link between downsized labour and external dependency, tightened by the semi-exclusion of the country from scientific-technical innovation, implies a defeated society.

A reconfiguration has also occurred in the camp of property and power, which casts new light on its previous character. Rather than relying on mechanical deductions from immediate material interest or social tradition, de Oliveira's stress here falls on the conscious aspect of class decisions, taken with a certain degree of freedom that only made their tenor worse. In the period of underdevelopment, he insists, the dominant bloc chose a division of labour that would shore up its rule, even at the price of mediocre international standing. He cites the view of Fernando Henrique Cardoso who argued, shortly before the coup of 1964, that the industrial bourgeoisie in Brazil actually preferred to be a junior partner of Western capitalism than to risk an eventual challenge

¹ Published in one volume as Francisco de Oliveira, *Crítica à Razão Dualista—O Ornitorrinco*, Boitempo: São Paulo 2003.

to its hegemony. In the face of this historic renunciation, the task of continuing the country's economic development would fall to the organized urban masses: 'Ultimately the question will be: sub-capitalism or socialism?'² Forty years later, de Oliveira finds an unexpected grain of optimism in that elite renunciation—but an optimism cast back into the past and which, by contrast, clouds the present. If such choices and decisions had existed, then the 'door to transformation' once stood open. Even if ignored, or deliberately refused, break-outs in the period of the Second Industrial Revolution—when science and technology were not yet monopolized—were still possible. It is a line of thought that warrants a certain nostalgia for underdevelopment and its struggles, viewed from the petrified present.

Outcomes of underdevelopment

The most polemical and counter-intuitive thesis of 'The Duckbilled Platypus' is that a new social class has emerged in Brazil. Starting from the 'recent points of pragmatic convergence between the PT and the PSDB' and the 'apparent paradox that Lula's government is executing Cardoso's programme, and radicalizing it', de Oliveira remarks that:

this is not a mistake, but the expression of a genuinely new social stratum, based on technicians and intellectuals doubling as bankers—the core of the PSDB; and workers become pension-fund managers—the core of the PT. What they have in common is control over access to public funds, and an insider's knowledge of the lay of the financial land.³

The irony of this formation is evident. To the disappointment of socialists, the Centre-Left that emerged in the struggle against the military dictatorship of the 60s and 70s did not survive the re-democratization of the 80s. With Cardoso's ascent to power in 1994, the division of the political landscape crystallized into an electoral antagonism between Centre-Right and Left, accompanied by the corresponding flurry of epithets. After ten years of Centre-Right government, Lula's victory might seem to have marked a climax in this confrontation. In the light of the PT regime's first measures, however, de Oliveira reckons that the nuclei of each of the two adversaries in reality constitute two faces of

² Fernando Henrique Cardoso, *Empresário industrial e desenvolvimento econômico no Brasil*, São Paulo 1964, pp. 186–7.

³ See below, pp. 55–6. The PSDB is the Social-Democratic Party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira), led by Cardoso.

the same class. The allies who fell out over the tasks of repairing the ravages of the dictatorship and its economic miracle in the 80s have, in current straits, reunited once more. This second confluence, amid much mutual contestation and antipathy, is an effect not of the good old tasks but of a new agenda, dictated by the latest anti-social needs of capital as it deepens its dominion over society. As de Oliveira notes, the fact that the country's main investment funds are owned by workers might lead an unwary spectator to imagine this was a socialist society. But it turns out that the platypus is not endowed with ethical or political self-understanding: the workers' economy functions as if no order existed beyond capital—which, in turn, is also a choice. The parallel is completed by the conversion of PSDB intellectuals—veterans, it is worth recalling, of social struggles against the military regime and years of earlier militancy on the left—into so many technocrats.

The platypus, then, has now ceased to be underdeveloped, since the openings provided by the Second Industrial Revolution—which made the advances needed for Brazil to catch up with the metropolises seem possible—have been closed off. Not that the country can enter the new regime of capital accumulation, for which it lacks the means. What it is left with are transfers of assets, especially privatizations, which are not true accumulation and do nothing to lessen social inequality. The picture that emerges is of a 'truncated accumulation', whose economic mechanisms remain to be studied. The country has thus become defined by what it is not: that is, by an underdevelopment that no longer obtains, and by a model of accumulation that is out of reach.

This form of non-being nevertheless characterizes a society that still palpably exists, even if its inner workings have yet to be identified; hence the comparison to an enigmatic sport of nature. Yet there is no established (let alone paved) route from a backward to an advanced—or rather, a losing to a winning—position within the world economy. If such a path does exist, it does not conform to any universal notion of progress, whose principles it would suffice to respect. On the contrary, in its present form, progress is reduced to precepts of the market, driving global inequality. One of the qualities of de Oliveira's study is a dialectical conception of progress, without providential illusions, doctrinaire convictions or attempts to conceal its regressive consequences; merits which separate the essay from the half-naïve, half-ideological faith in progress of so much of the Left and former Left in Brazil.

This is an analysis whose categories are subject to unexpected and dizzying shifts—they are ‘in gestation’; already out of date; abortive; mutable; inapplicable, etc. A key class loses its relevance; a ‘shocking’ successor arrives on the scene; the development of productive forces degrades a sector of humanity, instead of saving it; underdevelopment disappears, but not its disasters; informal labour, a heterodox and provisional resort of accumulation, becomes a mark of social disintegration. In the style of a dialectic of enlightenment, the threshold of changes is not determined by any doctrinaire construction but plotted within a provisional and heuristic totalization that seeks to track the actual course of events. This is a rare example of a Marxism closely allied to empirical research. The present defines its agenda, in a strong sense—‘the critic needs to grasp reality firmly by the horns’, as Walter Benjamin put it. But there is no inclination here to adhere to the dominant order, or to ride the crest of the wave. If anything, de Oliveira is closer to a sociological Quixote. His commitment to contemporary reality reflects both a theoretical rigour and the will of thought to be effective—an aspect of its modern dignity. In this light, to disregard the appearance of a new tendency or the desuetude of old beliefs would be sheer ignorance. That does not mean the present and future are palatable, let alone better than forms or aspirations that have lost their basis. The mutual denunciations of the political scene should be studied dispassionately, as elements of knowledge. This contemporary gaze, without optimism or illusions, offers a deep and complex realism.

On one level, to define Brazil by what it is not is the symptom of a period of decomposition. In place of the deadlocks of underdevelopment, with its familiar and socially contested national moorings, the emerging sub-systems are notable rather for their negation of former expectations than for what they reveal of the new order. But this is also a situation conducive to a kind of immediatism that is the opposite of any national concerns, or memories of lived experience; these have now fallen into historic discredit. De Oliveira’s enterprise, energetically seeking to identify the new order of things, will have none of this curtailment—one that might reasonably be labelled positivist, despite its postmodern trappings. ‘The Duckbilled Platypus’ expresses a spirit of resistance that is poles apart from the roseate kitsch and *suivisme* of an unruffled progressivism. Deepening our awareness of contemporary reality by a sustained consideration of its terms, it typically locates their origins in other areas, other times, other social sectors, other lands. It is not a matter

of indifference that capital is financed with workers' money, that financial managers are trade unionists, that bankers are intellectuals, that the new fragmentation is precipitated by the coherence of the system elsewhere. These are our real determinants, whose suppression produces a social unconsciousness close to that 'indistinction' which Marx considered a service rendered to the establishment by vulgar economics. By insisting on these relationships, and the social irrationality they embody, de Oliveira raises our consciousness to the level required for a critique of the ruling order—giving us both a disturbing sense of remorse, shame, dissatisfaction, and clear reasons for revolt.

Within the increasingly dense global network in which Brazil is now inserted, de Oliveira notes the stamp of 'Permanent Exception' on our everyday life. *Pace* those of our compatriots who think us part of the First World, how can one fail to see that shanty-towns do not accord with a modern urban order (although in local practice the two go very well together); that informal labour is at variance with a commodity regime; that patrimonialism is not compatible with inter-capitalist competition? It is an unequivocal achievement to have highlighted the systematic nature of the contrast between our daily existence and the supranational norm—which we deploy, of course, in our own self-regulation. Our advance is turning us (who would have thought it?) into contemporaries of Machado de Assis, who over a century ago identified the Brazilian slave-trader as the exception to the Victorian gentleman, the voluble retainer as the exception to the solid citizen, the wiles of the poor girl next door as the exception to romantic passion, the advice of a frock-coated parasite as the exception to the counsels of enlightenment. Dynamism is less incompatible with stasis than it might seem. That said, there are many ways of confronting this pervasive disjunction, which resumes the position of the country (or *ex-country*, or semi-country, or region) in the contemporary order of the world.

Past prospects

Conceived in a spirit of conclusive revision, 'The Duckbilled Platypus' does not reject the perspectives of 'Critique of Dualist Reason' but suggests the causes for their defeat. The publication of both essays in a single volume represents a new diagnosis of the epoch. It also records the current state of the author's hopes, in a theoretical rendering of accounts and a self-historicization. Once this difference is clear, it must

be admitted that the 'Critique'—written with great combative verve at the height of the military dictatorship, in the midst of its economic miracle and slaughter of the armed opposition—was fighting a battle already half lost. Its description of the barbarism of the process under way in Brazil only averted the image of a monster because it held out a promise of its supersession.

The famous thesis of 'Critique of Dualist Reason' redefined not only the primitive character of Brazil's agriculture at the time but also the peculiar persistence of subsistence-economy forms in urbanized settings, and the demoralized swelling of the tertiary sector. For de Oliveira—and contrary to received wisdom—these were not remnants of the past but functional parts of the country's modern development, contributing to the low cost of labour on which our accumulation depended. This was a dialectical masterstroke on two fronts. On the one hand, the precarious life of the popular classes was traced to the new dynamic of capitalism—that is, the contemporary workings of society—and not to the archaic legacies we trail behind us. On the other hand, that very precariousness was essential to economic accumulation, and there could be no greater error than to treat it as if it were a plague visited upon our organism from the outside. On the contrary, it was necessary to recognize it as part of an accelerated process of development, in the course of which the destitute could be raised to decent employment and citizenship, and the country gain a new international standing. *Poverty and the task of overcoming it were our historic opportunity!* Without going into the factual merits of the hypothesis, what is striking is the political will it expressed: a resolve that the poor could not be abandoned to their fate, for if they were it would make progress impossible. In place of the murderous dichotomy of civilization and barbarism, which treated the poor as so much human waste, here was a generous notion that the future depended on a national integration—miraculous, perhaps—in which an informed, social-historical consciousness would triumph over short-term calculations. In its time, this was an idea that graced the writings of Celso Furtado and the Cinema Novo's visions of suffering, as well as Dependency Theory.

With a conceptual originality and sense of popular life that perhaps came from the North-East, and were at the opposite pole from the progressivism of the dictatorship, de Oliveira imagined a modern scheme for national development which conceived the country as a conscious whole—the

necessary pre-condition for its self-transformation. He criticized the CEPAL dualism that differentiated modernization from the traditional sectors of society, if conceding that an ethical version of the former could furnish humanitarian aid, remedy and tuition for the lethargy of the latter. In passing—this was not an opponent that deserved much respect—he refuted the regime's economists, who claimed that it was necessary to enlarge the cake of the advanced sector first, and only then distribute slices to the backward layers; a cynical argument no one believed.

At a theoretical level, 'Critique of Dualist Reason' derived from the undogmatic appropriation of Marxism at the University of São Paulo before 1964, which acquired a fresh political relevance at CEBRAP, a refuge during the leaden years of the dictatorship. Politics, economics and social classes should be analysed in articulation with each other—contrary to the thinking of the specialists in these disciplines. In the wake of Dependency Theory, de Oliveira defined underdevelopment as a disadvantageous (ex-colonial) position in the world division of labour, cemented by an internal articulation of interests and classes—which, in turn, was cemented by this subordinate international position. Hence the importance he attributed to the clash of ideas and ideologies, which could help destabilize not only the country's iniquitous internal equilibrium but also its location in the global system; making possible the struggle for a better one. This was also the source of de Oliveira's habit, unusual in Brazil, of criticizing his closest allies—at that time, Celso Furtado, Maria da Conceição Tavares, José Serra, Fernando Cardoso—in the service of impersonal objectives. A little unexpectedly, class struggle features somewhat similarly. De Oliveira is not a Bolshevik, and his idea of class confrontation has less to do with the seizure of power by workers than with a self-enlightenment of the nation which would free it from prejudice, and provide a knowledge of its own anatomy and potential that would allow it to take its fate into its own hands.

Nothing could be further from de Oliveira's thinking than dreams of a Brazilian superpower or a wish to get the better of neighbouring countries. Still, it is possible that, in sublimated form, his *découpage* remains tributary to the competitive side of developmentalism. For how could it be otherwise? In a world system that reproduces inequalities, how could one not fight for a better placing, one that is less impaired and closer to the victors? How can one escape a disadvantageous position without taking one's seat among those who put others at a disadvantage?

Reflection on the impossibility of a competition without losers—or on an equally impossible ‘levelling from the top’ (from which top, exactly?)—compels one to call into question the order that creates such a dilemma. Here, having spurred political will within the ambit of the nation, dialectical thought would leave it paralysed—were it not to invent a new kind of politics, for which the nation would be only a relative horizon. Such thoughts have a likeness to de Oliveira’s bold idea that social iniquity is both task and opportunity, and his meditations on de-commodification.⁴ One of the axes of ‘The Duckbilled Platypus’ is the opposition between Darwin and Marx—the contrast between natural selection, as an immediate interplay of interests, and conscious solutions to the problems of the nation and of humanity. As did Marx, de Oliveira always insists that nothing happens without the intervention of consciousness. Yet . . . present everywhere, but bewitched by economic interest, consciousness functions in a ‘natural’ fashion, enduring the calamities that it might oppose, were it to grow—and, so to speak, mutate.

⁴ Francisco de Oliveira, *Os direitos do antivalor*, Petrópolis 1998.

THE DUCKBILLED PLATYPUS

The platypus sports an unbeatable combination for strangeness: first, an odd habitat with curiously adapted form to match; second, the real reason for its special place in zoological history—its enigmatic mélange of reptilian (or birdlike) with obvious mammalian characteristics. Ironically, the feature that first suggested pre-mammalian affinity—the ‘duckbill’ itself—supports no such meaning. The platypus’s muzzle is a purely mammalian adaptation to feeding in fresh waters, not a throwback to ancestral form.

Stephen Jay Gould, *Bully for Brontosaurus*

THE THEORY OF underdevelopment—the only original alternative to the classical growth theories of Smith and Ricardo—is decidedly not evolutionist. As is well known, evolutionism had a major influence in practically all scientific fields. Marx himself harboured a great admiration for Darwin, the formulator of one of the most important scientific paradigms of all time, whose dominance is today near absolute. But neither Marx nor the theorists of underdevelopment were evolutionists. Marx’s theory, which focused on ruptures, saw concrete class interests as the driving force of history—that is, the consciousness, however imperfect, of constituent subjects: ‘Men make their own history’. Evolutionism excludes ‘consciousness’: natural selection operates by chance to eliminate the weakest. For their part, the theorists at the UN’s Economic Commission on Latin America (CEPAL) were influenced by Weber—also at the margins by Marx—whose paradigm is singularity: not selection, but action imbued with meaning. There is no Weberian equivalent of the evolutionary ‘finality’ of the reproduction of the species.

Underdevelopment, then, did not form part of an evolutionary chain stretching from the primitive world through successive stages to

full development. Rather it was a historical singularity—the form of capitalist development in *ex*-colonies, now become a periphery of the world system, that furnished inputs for capital accumulation in the core. This relationship, which persisted even through drastic transformations, was just what prevented the former colonies from ‘evolving’ into the higher stages of capitalist accumulation; that is to say, from catching up with the dynamic centre, however often they received injections of modernization from it. Marxism was equipped with the most formidable arsenal for the critique of classical economics, and possessed a general account of capitalist development in its theory of accumulation. But it failed to specify its concrete historical forms, above all in the periphery. When it did attempt this, it obtained major results—the ‘Prussian road’, ‘passive revolution’—but of the most general sort. Indeed, for a long time a kind of Marxist ‘evolutionism’ held sway, yielding a rickety theorization of the capitalist periphery based on Stalin’s schema of historical stages, running all the way from a primitive communism before the emergence of classes, to a modern communism after their disappearance. In the case of Latin America, where the theory of underdevelopment was considered ‘reformist’ and an ally of us imperialism, stagism led to serious errors of political strategy.

Underdevelopment could be classified as an instance of Gramscian ‘passive revolution’, as Carlos Nelson Coutinho and Luis Jorge Werneck Vianna maintain.¹ But unlike the theory of underdevelopment, this notion tells us nothing about the particular *ex*-colonial conditions of Latin America that give the states of the region their political specificity. Nor does it touch on the descent of labour from the degrading institutions of slavery and the *encomienda*, which confer on them their social specificity. Florestan Fernandes came close to an interpretation along such Gramscian lines in *A Revolução Burguesa no Brasil* (1975), but he also owed much to CEPAL and Celso Furtado. Behind these writers lay the classic analyses of Brazil produced in the 1930s, which dwelt on the peculiarities of Portugal’s colony in South America and a sociability shaped by a combination of the Iberian legacy and a system of exploitation based on slavery.

Underdevelopment was thus not a truncated evolution, but a product of dependency, issuing from the conjunction of Brazil’s place in the

¹ See Luis Jorge Werneck Vianna, *A Revolução Passiva*, Rio de Janeiro 1997, and Carlos Nelson Coutinho, ‘Uma via não-clássica para o capitalismo’, in Maria da Conceição D’Incao, ed., *História e Ideal: Ensaio sobre Cato Prado Jr*, São Paulo 1989.

international division of capitalist labour with the articulation of domestic economic interests. For this very reason the internal class struggle offered an opening—linked to a shift in the international division of labour—in the shape of the Revolution of 1930 which brought Vargas to power; and the industrialization by import-substitution that ensued from it. In his *Formação Econômica do Brasil* (1959), Celso Furtado gave us the key to that conjuncture: the crash of 1929 leading to a kind of Brazilian 18th Brumaire, in which industrialization arose as a project for continued domination through other forms of the social division of labour—even at the cost of toppling the coffee-owners from their central position within the local bourgeoisie. The term ‘underdevelopment’ is not neutral: its prefix indicates that the peripheral formations so constituted have a place in the international division of capitalist labour, which is accordingly hierarchical, since otherwise the concept would be meaningless. But the concept is not stagist in either a Darwinian or Stalinist sense.

Advancing across backwardness

My ‘Critique of Dualist Reason’ attempted to bring these crossed paths together: as an exercise in critique it belonged to the Marxist tradition, and as a study in specificity to the line of CEPAL. Although the passions of the time moved me to some invective against the *cepalinos*, I have long repented of those errors, which were a clumsy way of trying to introduce new considerations into the building of a specifically Brazilian model of underdevelopment—in their fashion, a homage of vice to virtue. The essay was Marxist and *cepalino* in the sense that it sought to show how the articulation of the economic forms of underdevelopment included political forces, not as an external contingency but a structuring factor. Furtado had touched on this in his interpretation of the crisis of overproduction of coffee in the 1930s, but then abandoned this great insight. The *Eighteenth Brumaire* should already have taught Marxists that politics is not external to class movements, that classes are forged in struggle; but they too had forgotten this lesson. Here were the two legacies to which I returned in trying to understand why and how leaders like Vargas and their creatures—the Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (PTB) and the Partido Social-Democrático (PSD)—had presided over Brazil’s industrialization, resting a modern manufacturing sector on a backward subsistence agriculture.

Three points stood out in this process. The first concerned the function of subsistence agriculture in the internal accumulation of capital. Here,

Raúl Prebisch and Furtado had run into the ground with a notion of the backward sector as obstacle to development, a thesis still in vogue in such theorizations as Arthur Lewis's account of wage-formation in conditions of excess labour-power.² These ideas lacked any historical basis, since the Brazilian economy had posted a secular growth rate since the nineteenth century without parallel in any other capitalist economy in the world.³ Studies of the coffee economy showed that its initial cycle of expansion made use of the subsistence plots of the crop-pickers to supply their needs at low cost, a system then incorporated into the mature *fazenda* system—benefactions as 'primitive accumulation'. Furtado himself, when he studied subsistence farming in the Northeast and in Minas, saw its 'function' in the genesis of accumulation and the expansion of markets outward from São Paulo. I argued, then, that backward agriculture financed modern agriculture and industrialization.

The birth of the modern Brazilian banking system, one of whose cradles was in Minas, offered further proof of the relation between forms of subsistence and the most advanced sectors of capital, a theme we can find in Marx's *Civil War in France*. I noted that subsistence agriculture not only helped to lower the cost of reproduction of the labour force in the cities, facilitating the accumulation of industrial capital, but also produced a surplus that could not be so reinvested, and was drained off in real-estate speculation. Francisco Sá Jr's essay of the same period explored this process in the local conditions of the Northeast.⁴

In this set of imbrications between subsistence agriculture, the banking system, the financing of industrial accumulation and the cheapening of the reproduction of the labour force in the cities lay the fulcrum of capitalist expansion in Brazil. But this was not perceived by the line of Furtado and CEPAL, for all its heuristic value. I strongly disagreed with theories in which backward agriculture was viewed simply as an obstruction, the explosive growth of cities treated as a marginal phenomenon, and legislation for a minimum wage held to be incompatible with capital accumulation. Not that I considered these solid foundations for

² Arthur Lewis, *Theory of Economic Growth*, London 1955; Raúl Prebisch, 'El desarrollo económico de América Latina y algunos de sus principales problemas', *El Trimestre Económico*, vol. 16, no. 63, 1949. This seminal CEPAL report can be found in Adolfo Gurrieri, ed., *La obra de Prebisch en la CEPAL*, Mexico 1982.

³ See Angus Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy 1820–1992*, Paris 1995.

⁴ 'O desenvolvimento da agricultura nordestina e a função das atividades de subsistência', *Estudos CEBRAP*, January 1993.

the expansion of Brazilian capitalism. On the contrary, it was and is the latter's weakness to generate such an unequal distribution of income as to constitute a grave obstacle to future accumulation.

It was from this that I derived an explanation for the role of the 'reserve army' involved in informal activities in the city. For most thinkers of the time these were little more than consumers of the surplus or mere *lumpen*; in my view, they were one of the ways in which the cost of reproduction of the urban labour force was lowered. The phenomenon of shanty constructions explained the paradox that the poor, including factory workers, were the owners of their own homes—if that is what the horrors of the *favelas* can be called: so reducing the monetary cost of their own reproduction.

In no sense was this a Darwinian adaptation to the rural and urban conditions of capitalist expansion in Brazil, nor a 'survival strategy', as a certain kind of anthropology would have it. Rather, these were basically the unresolved forms of the agrarian question and the status of the labour force, the subordination of the proletariat, as a new urban social class, to the state—so many expressions of the distinctively Brazilian form of *transformismo*, as a conservative modernization, or of revolution in production without bourgeois revolution. For once the dualism of CEPAL theories was rejected, what struck the eye was the 'productive' character of our backwardness, its indispensable role as a partner in capitalist expansion. With this, underdevelopment could be seen as the permanent exception to the capitalist system on its periphery. As Benjamin said, the oppressed know what is happening to them. Ultimately, underdevelopment is the exception that is made of the oppressed: shanty-towns as the exception to the city, informal labour as the exception to the commodity, patrimonialism as the exception to inter-capitalist competition, state coercion as the exception to private accumulation, Keynesianism *avant la lettre*—this last found in 'late capitalisms' too.³

The singular condition of underdevelopment could have been resolved in a non-evolutionary way, out of its own contradictions, if there had been a social will to take advantage of the 'riches of iniquity' on the periphery. Brazil's place in the international division of capitalist labour, reaffirmed by every cycle of modernization, could have provided the modern

³ See José Luis Flori, ed., *Estados e Modas no Desenvolvimento das Nações*, Petrópolis 1999, especially the second part.

technical means to 'jump stages', as in the Vargas and Kubitschek periods. The growth of trade unions could have brought an end to the high rates of exploitation made possible by the low cost of the labour force. Agrarian reform could not only have stemmed the 'reserve army' in the cities, but also liquidated patrimonial power. But half of the solution was missing: such emancipation was not a goal shared by the national bourgeoisie. On the contrary, already weakened by the growing internationalization of industry, above all in the newest branches of manufacture, it turned its back on an alliance with subordinate classes.⁶ The coup of 1964, followed by others in the majority of Latin American countries, closed down possibilities that had once lain open.

The long military dictatorship of 1964–84 opted unambiguously for the 'Prussian road': heavy political repression; iron control of the unions; a high degree of state coercion; an increase in the weight of state enterprises in the economy, beyond the dreams of any nationalist of the previous period; an opening to foreign capital—'forced march' industrialization, in Antonio Barros de Castro's phrase. No effort was made to do away with patrimonialism, nor to resolve the acute problem of the internal financing of capitalist expansion, which had been the Achilles' heel of the previous constellation of forces. Instead external debt became the way out, opening the gates to financialization of the economy and of the state. The results were plain by the time of the last military government, under the same economic czar who had presided over the earlier 'Brazilian miracle', Delfim Neto. Considered a miracle-worker, it became clear he was a total impostor.

Anatomy of the platypus

What is the platypus like? It is highly urbanized, with a sparse rural population and labour force, and therefore little pre-capitalist residue; on the contrary, it has a strong agrobusiness sector. It has a well-developed

⁶ Fernando Henrique Cardoso's *Empresário Industrial e Desenvolvimento Econômico*, São Paulo 1964, recognized that the national industrial bourgeoisie preferred an alliance with international capital. This is perhaps the best academic work produced by this former sociologist, now ex-president and eternal candidate for occupancy of the Planalto. Roberto Schwarz maintains that, during his presidency, Cardoso implemented to the letter the conclusions of this book: having renounced a national project, the local bourgeoisie opted without hesitation to integrate the country into global capitalism.

industrial sector that has undergone the Second Industrial Revolution, and is currently inching its way towards the Third—molecular-digital or information—Revolution. Its service sector is very diversified at the high-income end, if more extravagantly wasteful than sophisticated; at the other end, it is extremely primitive, tied to the meagre spending of the poor. The financial sector is still somewhat atrophied, yet because of the financialization of the economy and high internal debt, it nonetheless accounts for a high proportion of GDP: 9 per cent in 1998, whereas the figure is only 4 per cent in the us, Germany and France, and 6 per cent in the UK—economies at the financial centre of globalized capitalism.⁷ In terms of the economically active population, the rural share is small and declining, industrial employment peaked in the 1970s but is now also on the wane, and there has been a continued boom in service-sector jobs. This is the portrait of an animal whose 'evolution' has followed all the family footsteps; if it were a primate it would practically be a *homo sapiens*.

The platypus seems to be endowed with 'consciousness', since it was democratized almost three decades ago. But it has yet to produce knowledge, science and technology: it is basically still copying, though the deciphering of the *xylella fastidiosa* genome indicates that it may not be far away from certain advances in the field of biogenetics.⁸ One can only hope it will not decide to clone itself. What is lacking from its 'evolution'? The answer lies in its circulatory system: the high proportion of debt to GDP demonstrates that the economy cannot function without an external supply of money. The advances it has received are formidable: in 2001 total foreign debt reached an alarming 41 per cent of GDP, and interest payments servicing it were 9.1 per cent of GDP. There are few capitalist economies like this. Perhaps the proportion is as high for the us, but with a radical difference: the vital fluid that circulates internationally

⁷ The Brazilian figure is from IBGE, *System of National Accounts*; for the other countries, averages for the period 1985–91 are taken from Fernando Cardim de Carvalho, and are available at www.mre.gov.br. Note, however, that the Brazilian figure dates from the period of low inflation after the Plano Real, which distorts the calculation of the product of the financial sector, posing various methodological difficulties. By way of comparison, in 1993 the financial sector accounted for an estimated 32.8 per cent of Brazilian GDP.

⁸ Marluce Moura, 'O novo produto brasileiro', *Pesquisa FAPESP* no. 55, July 2000. *Xylella fastidiosa* is a bacterium that causes a range of plant diseases, notably affecting orange trees and coffee plants.

and returns to the us is its own blood, the dollar, which the us itself issues. From this point of view, 'evolution' has taken a step backwards: we are no longer looking at underdevelopment, but a situation that if anything resembles that before the crisis of 1930, when the costs of servicing the debt—that is, interest payments plus amortization of the principal—consumed the country's entire receipts from exports.⁹ But there is a fundamental difference: before 1930, coffee exports constituted the entire Brazilian economy; we are now dealing with an industrialized country that is nevertheless returning to the same subordinate financial position.¹⁰ This external dependency has also created an equally terrifying internal burden of debt, as a mechanism for absorbing the domestic liquidity injected by the influx of speculative capital from abroad. But it is also an advance on future production so that, if we add up the internal and external debt, the result is that in order to produce a given annual GDP, Brazil must run up an equivalent amount of debt. The financialization of the economy has become a reiterative process.

Subjugation of virtual labour

In the underdeveloped past, 'informal' labour could be regarded as a temporary transition towards a formalization of wage relations, of which there were signs by the end of the 70s¹¹—in my view, combining insufficient overall accumulation with a bias towards industry. In theoretical terms, here was a form *this side of value*: the very work-force created by migration towards the cities, rather than a pre-capitalist reserve army of labour, was used to provide services to cities that were in the process of industrializing.

⁹ See Aníbal Villanova Villela and Wilson Suzigan, *Política do Governo e Crescimento da Economia Brasileira, 1889–1945*, Rio de Janeiro 1973. I have made particular reference to their research in an essay on the extreme violence of the inter-war crisis. 'A Emergência do Modo de Produção de Mercadorias: uma interpretação teórica da economia da República Velha no Brasil', in Boris Fausto, ed., *História Geral da Civilização Brasileira*, vol. III: *O Brasil Republicano*, São Paulo 1975.

¹⁰ Between the final quarter of 2002 and March 2003, the external loans that financed Brazilian exports dried up, and the real lost 30 per cent of its value. Once political fears of the PT government vanished, external funds flowed back and the exchange rate strengthened again. Such dramatic financial dependency, with frightening levels of volatility, is now practically irreversible.

¹¹ See Elson Luciano Silva Pires, *Metamorfoses e Regulação: O Mercado de Trabalho do Brasil nos Anos Oitenta*, PhD thesis, Sociology Department, University of São Paulo 1995.

Subjugated by a combination of the molecular-digital revolution and the globalization of capital, the productivity of labour has somersaulted towards the plenitude of abstract labour. In its dual constitution—concrete forms and abstract ‘essence’—the consumption of living labour has always encountered an obstacle in the porous border between total time worked and productive time worked. All growth in labour productivity originates in capital’s struggle to close the gap between those two quantities. Ideally, the aim would be to transform the total time worked into unpaid labour, which only sorcery could achieve. Here absolute and relative surplus value virtually merge: absolute, because capital makes use of the worker when it needs him; relative, since that is only possible because of immense productivity.

There is a contradiction here: the path of relative surplus value should be one of a decrease in unpaid labour, but in reality it is the opposite. Rather, increases in the productivity of labour mean that intervals of non-work disappear, and all working time becomes production time. The services are the region of the social division of labour where this rupture is most vivid. A kind of ‘abstract virtual labour’ has been created. Its ‘exotic’ forms can be found where labour appears as recreation, entertainment, community between workers and consumers: in the shopping centres. But it is in information that abstract virtual labour resides. The heaviest, most primitive kinds of work are also home to it. Its form is a phantasmagoria, a non-place and non-time, equal to total time. Think of someone in their house, accessing their bank account via computer, doing the work that would previously have been allotted to a bank clerk: what kind of labour is this? Concepts such as formal and informal have no explanatory force here.

In this perspective, underdevelopment would appear to have been an evolution turned inside out. The dominant classes, incorporated into a division of labour that sets producers of raw materials against producers of capital goods, chose an internal form of division of labour that would preserve their dominance. ‘Consciousness’ selected it, rather than chance. So the door remained open to transformation. Today, the platypus has lost the capacity to choose; therewith its evolution is truncated. The evolutionist, neo-Schumpeterian literature on the economy of technology suggests that technical progress is incremental, and so depends

on prior scientific accumulation.²³ While technical progress during the Second Industrial Revolution was based on knowledge that was widely diffused, allowing countries to 'leap forward' suddenly by appropriating it, the new kind of scientific knowledge is not available on the shelves of the supermarket of innovations, but is locked up in patents. It is also disposable and ephemeral, as Derrida has remarked. This combination of disposability, ephemerality and incremental progress blocks the path of economies and societies that remain in the rearguard of technical-scientific knowledge. The deciphering of the *xylella fastidiosa* genome looks as if it will be little more than an ornament of local pride, a demonstration of the skills of Brazilian researchers in a specialized niche, not a presage of a new rule for the production of knowledge henceforth.

The unattainable matrix

The molecular-digital revolution erases the frontier between science and technology: the two are shaped by a single process. Science is made by making technology, and vice versa. This implies that technological products are not available for use, divorced from the science that produced them—just as the reverse holds: scientific knowledge cannot be produced without the appropriate technology. The manufacture of atomic and hydrogen bombs and the corresponding production of nuclear energy—though fusion has yet to be successfully completed—already exhibited that cancellation, or supersession. The molecular-digital revolution deletes—to use a computing term—the barrier between them definitively. What purely technological products remain are merely consumer goods.

From the point of view of capital accumulation, this has profound consequences. The first and most obvious is that peripheral—now sub-national—systems or countries can only copy disposable commodities, not the techno-scientific matrix that produces them. The result is a perpetual race against the clock. The second and less obvious consequence is that accumulation realized by copying disposable commodities also enters into an accelerated obsolescence, and leaves nothing behind, unlike accumulation based on the Second Industrial Revolution. The new matrix demands levels of investment that always remain beyond

²³ See Carlos Eduardo Fernandez da Silveira, *Desenvolvimento tecnológico no Brasil: Autonomia e dependência num país industrializado periférico*, PhD thesis, University of Campinas 2001.

the capacities of domestic forces of accumulation, reinforcing the mechanisms of external financial dependency. Results always fall short of efforts: rates of accumulation, measured by the coefficient of investment in GDP, are declining, as are growth rates. In terms frequently used by the theorists of CEPAL, the output-capital ratio deteriorates: more and more capital is required to obtain less and less product.¹³ Since globalization increases labour productivity without bringing about capital accumulation—just because of the divisible nature of the molecular-digital technical form—incomes remain staggeringly unequal, intensifying this contradiction. To give another example, the productivity of soft-drink vendors at stadium entrances has been increased by the ‘just in time’ inventories of the refreshment manufacturers and distributors, but the labour by which the vendors realize the value of such merchandise could scarcely be more primitive. Molecular-digital accumulation conjoins the crudest use of labour-power.

Impasses of the periphery

Overcoming disposability and ephemerality would require a colossal effort of scientific and technical research, multiplying the share of research and development in GDP several times over, to leap to the forefront of technical progress. According to Carlos Fernandez da Silveira, in 1997 the Brazilian figure was less than 1.5 per cent. The accumulation of capital needed for a jump of these proportions would mean not only lifting the ratio of investment to GDP over a long period—in 1999 it stood at some 18 per cent—but above all changing the mix of investment, with a higher proportion going to R&D.¹⁴ There have been historical periods in which certain national economic subsystems have accomplished such a feat, at the cost of enormous political repression

¹³ The prospect of Brazil producing its own digital tv sets, or else copying what is internationally available, is now under discussion. Another option would be to enter into a technical-scientific consortium with China. The pr's Treasury Minister, Antonio Palocci, takes the view that it is not worth it, since it would require an investment of billions of *real* for a precarious return, given the small size of the Brazilian market, and the system of patents overseen by the wro. For him, any attempt to export Brazilian-made digital tvs would be a dangerous daydream. The same dilemma presented itself in the case of colour tvs, and was resolved by adopting the Palm-m and NTSC models, that is, disposable copies. No technological-scientific effort was made to create an original model, only to adapt existing patterns.

¹⁴ Data taken from *Revista BNDES*, June 2001.

and an extremely frugal regime in which the production of consumer goods remains insignificant. In the case of Japan, for instance, the population has become so accustomed to saving that the country now has an enormous surplus of deposits that do not become investment; even the consumption of electronic gadgets—whose production has shifted to China—cannot absorb Japanese incomes. In the case of the Soviet Union, the production of consumer goods was utterly scorned, crippling Soviet agriculture and eventually leading to widespread hunger. Here, the technical forms of capital accumulation of the Second Industrial Revolution facilitated extraordinary advances; but because these were typically indivisible, they could not be used to produce wage goods: metallurgical equipment cannot make bread.¹⁵ The paradox is that capital accumulation in the forms of the Second Industrial Revolution could move forward using the technical-scientific knowledge that was available, though the forms themselves were indivisible; in the molecular-digital revolution, the forms are divisible, but technical-scientific knowledge itself becomes indivisible in the unity of science and development.

The case of Brazil was quite different. Here, even in the best years under Kubitschek, investment never exceeded 22 per cent of GDP. To raise it, the military dictatorship resorted to external financing, creating an enormous debt that became an engine of coercive growth and financial subordination. But since incremental accumulation must be continual, there being no 'day after' when high rates of investment are no longer required, there now seems nothing to hand for a country that has just created a Zero Hunger programme to cope with the terrible, prosaic consequences of an immeasurably unequal distribution of income.

When they reach the periphery, the effects of an astounding increase in the productivity of labour—that abstract virtual labour—are devastating. Taking advantage of the enormous reserve of 'informal' labour created by industrialization, molecular-digital accumulation did not need to undermine the concrete-abstract forms of labour drastically, except in

¹⁵ In the theoretical debates of the 1950s, the 'model' adopted by the Soviet Union seemed to give it an advantage—as Maurice Dobb and Nicholas Kaldor argued—because capital goods drove economic development. But due theoretical attention was not paid to the indivisibility of the technical forms of the Second Industrial Revolution, which finally led to the bottlenecks of the Soviet experience. In the Keynesian equation, $P = C + S$ or I . Which meant, in the Soviet case, that there was no way consumption would not suffer, although the model did produce astonishing growth rates in the first period of the Five Year Plans.

certain small Fordist niches. The extraction of surplus value could be accomplished without resistance, unimpeded by any of the earlier barriers to complete exploitation.

In the 1980s the tendency towards formalization of wage relations ground to a halt, and what is still improperly termed informal labour expanded. Converging with so-called productive restructuring, the result was what Robert Castel has termed 'disaffiliation', or the deconstruction of the wage relation.¹⁶ This process can be observed in every sector of the economy and at all levels. Tertiariation, casualization, flexibilization; unemployment rates of almost 30 per cent in Greater São Paulo, 25 per cent in Salvador; not as contradictorily as it might seem, occupations rather than jobs—groups of youths at intersections selling almost anything, both cleaning and dirtying car windscreens, peddlars everywhere. In São Paulo, Quinze and Boa Vista streets—traditional purlieus of bankers and their clerks—have become vast carpets of assorted ironmongery. The area around the handsome, brightly lit Municipal Theatre stages the dramas of a society in ruins, a bazaar of many forms where horribly kitsch copies of high-quality consumer goods are sold. Thousands of vendors of Coca-Cola, Guaraná, beer and mineral water throng the entrances to sports stadiums twice a week. We are theoretically dumbstruck: this is abstract virtual labour. Pious programmes attempt to 'train' this workforce, providing it with 'qualifications'—a Sisyphean task, like filling a basket with water, pursued in the belief that good old-fashioned work, 'on the books', will return when the business cycle revives.¹⁷ The reverse is true: when recovery occurs, it will be intermittent and of unpredictable duration. In every succeeding period of growth, abstract virtual labour will become still more deeply embedded.

Despite impressive growth rates, sustained over a long period, the platypus is one of the most unequal capitalist societies on earth—more so than even the poorest economies in Africa which cannot, strictly speaking, be considered capitalist at all. I am tempted to say, with French elegance, *et pour cause*. The most obvious determinants of the contradiction lie in its combination of external dependency with the depressed status of labour. The latter once supported a form of accumulation that

¹⁶ Robert Castel, *As Metamorfoses da Questão Social*, Petrópolis 1998.

¹⁷ In all these 're-qualification' courses, workers are taught some computing, the new polyvalent worker's equivalent of an appeal to God. There is nothing more tragic: they are being taught the very foundations of disposability.

financed expansion—that is, underdevelopment—but, combined with the former, creates an internal market that can only consume copies, in a vicious circle.

Once the molecular-digital revolution becomes the principal technical form of capital accumulation, the market can be sliced up without giving rise to crises of realization, derived from over-accumulation. These occur only when the galloping concentration of wealth decelerates. So far as popular consumption is concerned, despite well-intentioned criticisms, there are no crises of realization: digital compartmentalization is fully capable of descending into the infernos of a staggeringly skewed distribution of income. Crises of over-accumulation unfold solely as problems of oligopolistic competition, as in the telecommunications sector today, after privatization. There, greedy for the most succulent prizes, the global telecoms giants threw themselves into a predatory contest, setting up mobile phone systems and lowering the price of handsets—increasing imports—only to run up against obstacles in the indigence of the poor. Yet virtually all products of the molecular-digital revolution can reach the lowest-income groups as consumer durables, as the forests of antennas and even satellite dishes on the hovels of the *favelas* testify. It could be said, in the manner of the Frankfurt School, that this ability to bring consumption to the poorest sectors of society is itself the most powerful social narcotic. Celso Furtado had already warned of this development; but, in my view, overemphasized the importation of predatory consumption patterns, rather than viewing the distribution of income as its determinant. His last book, small but great, altered his admonition for the better.¹⁸

Emergence of a new class

In principle, of course, organizations of the working-class could transform the inequalitarian structure of our income distribution, as they did in the national subsystems of Europe with the creation of the welfare state—the spread of wage relations becoming the vector for labour to acquire collective power. This did in fact occur in the 1970s, up to a point. The military coup of 1964 had already been triggered by the signs that workers' organizations were no longer mere 'transmission belts' for what

¹⁸ See, respectively: *Subdesenvolvimento e estagnação na América Latina*, Rio de Janeiro 1966; *Análise do 'Modelo' Brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro 1972; and then *Em busca de novo modelo: reflexões sobre a crise contemporânea*, São Paulo 2002.

the sociological literature termed 'populist' domination.¹⁹ The emergence of the great union movements of the 1970s, of which the PT is largely the product, seemed to indicate that a 'European' road could be followed.²⁰ The share of wages in national income increased, and the universalizing logic of the demands pursued by the 'authentic' unions—in auto, oil and banking—looked set to expand wage labour and its correlates, social security and various indirect benefits. State enterprises were the spearhead of this process—oil workers were 'public functionaries' engaged in the production of commodities—which gave rise to large pension funds.

That movement halted in the 1980s and went into steep decline thereafter. Eroded by restructuring of production, abstract virtual labour and political 'force', labour no longer has any social 'force'. The shifts in the technical-material basis of the economy could hardly fail to have repercussions on class formation. If Edward Thompson was right to insist that a 'worker' is not merely a position in the process of production, it remains the case that if such positions did not exist, there would be no workers. Class representation lost its basis and the political power founded on it withered. In the specific conditions of Brazil, such a loss has an enormous significance. Today no break with the long Brazilian 'passive road' is in sight, but this is no longer underdevelopment.

The class structure was also truncated or modified. The upper layers of the old proletariat became, in part, what Robert Reich called 'symbolic analysts'.²¹ They are the administrators of the pension funds that originated in former state enterprises, of which the most powerful is Previ—the fund of the functionaries of the still state-owned Banco do

¹⁹ There is now an ongoing reassessment of that literature, which took populism to be a quasi-fascistic form in Latin America thriving on the passivity of the working classes. See Alexandre Fortes, 'Trabalhismo e Populismo: Novos Contornos de um Velho Debate', unpublished; and Jorge Ferreira, ed., *O Populismo e sua História. Debate e Crítica*, Rio de Janeiro 2001.

²⁰ There was a contradiction here: what was termed the 'authentic' trade union movement—as opposed to the stooges installed in the large unions by the dictatorship—worked along American lines. Negotiations at plant level then extended elsewhere precisely because the employers were large multinationals, above all in the automobile sector, which always led the movement in the industrial suburb of São Bernardo. The classic example was Metalúrgicos de São Paulo. Later, the crisis of external debt and the consequent inability of manufacturers to pass on higher costs to consumers brought this American-style unionism closer to European models.

²¹ See *The Work of Nations*, New York 1992.

Brasil. This stratum sits on the boards of such key financial institutions as the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES), in their capacity as workers' representatives. The final flowering of Brazilian welfare, which was basically organized in state enterprises, produced these funds. The Constitution of 1988 established the Fund for Workers' Assistance (FAT), which is now the largest source of long-term capital in the country, operating precisely through BNDES.²² This simulacrum of socialization has produced what Robert Kurz calls 'monetary subjects'.²³ The function of the workers who ascend to these posts is to ensure the profitability of the very funds that are financing the restructuring of production that creates unemployment.

Private-sector unions are now also organizing their own pension funds, after the example of those in the state sector. Ironically, this was precisely how Força Sindical defeated the trade union of the then nationalized steel industry (Siderúrgica Nacional), which was linked to the cur (Central Única dos Trabalhadores)—by forming an 'investors' club' to finance the privatization of the enterprise.²⁴ No-one subsequently asked what happened to the workers' shares, which either turned to dust or were bought up by the Vicunha group, which now controls the industry. It is this that explains recent pragmatic convergences between the PT and the PSDB, and the apparent paradox that Lula's government is carrying out Cardoso's programme, and radicalising it. This is not a mistake, but the expression of a genuinely new social stratum, based on technicians and intellectuals doubling as bankers—the core of the PSDB; and workers become pension-fund managers—the core of the PT.²⁵ What

²² The share of FAT funds in BNDES's liabilities increased from 2 per cent in 1989 to 40 per cent in 1999. See *Relatório de Atividades do BNDES de 1994 a 1999*. In turn, the share of BNDES expenditures in Gross Fixed Capital Formation, that is, in total investment, fluctuated between 3.25 per cent in 1990 to 6.26 in 1998 and 5.93 in 1999: *Revista BNDES*, June 2001.

²³ *Os Últimos Combates*, Petrópolis 1999.

²⁴ Força Sindical was founded in 1991 on the basis of São Paulo unions by Luis Antonio Medeiros, a 'pragmatic' former communist boss; one of its current leaders, Antonio Rogério Magri, was Labour Minister under Collor, before being dismissed amid allegations of corruption. The cur was formed in 1983 by unionists of diverse origins—both pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese communists, Trotskyists and Catholics.

²⁵ The board of FAN-Par, the holding company that controls the airline Varig, offered three seats to the PT. Of those who became part of the Foundation's governing body, one is, or was until recently, a member of the administrative council of BNDES, the state bank that financed the restructuring of the civil aviation sector, in which Varig is the main—and highly insolvent—enterprise.

they have in common is control over access to public funds, and an insider's knowledge of the lay of the financial land.²⁶

The formation of this class in the periphery of globalized capitalism—Reich's theories are essentially concerned with phenomena at the system's dynamic centre—needs closer scrutiny. For not only is there a new place for it in the system—above all in the financial sector and its mediations in the state—which satisfies one of the Marxist criteria for defining a class; there is also a new class 'experience', in Thompson's terms. The recent birthday celebrations of the former treasurer of CUT could hardly be a more vivid illustration of the fact that this experience is confined to the new stratum.²⁷ It cannot be extended to workers at large. Indeed, these people are no longer workers. They gather in the new 'pubs', mingling with the bourgeoisie and its executives, but this should not lead us to confuse the two: their 'place of production' is control over access to public funds, which is not that of the bourgeoisie. The class also meets Gramscian requirements, since it derives precisely from a new consensus on state and market. Finally, since classes are forged in class struggle, its dynamic lies in the appropriation of major portions of public funds. This is where its specificity lies: its lien is not on private-sector profits, but on the place where part of those profits are made: public finances. A Weberian would say that the new class is taking shape in 'value-rational action', which is ultimately the form of its consciousness.²⁸

²⁶ In the extreme case of post-Soviet Russia, such knowledge and previous control over state enterprises became straightforward plunder, but privatizations in Brazil and Argentina differed only in degree. Those who were economists under Cardoso and are now bankers are legion. The story of Menem's privatizations could have come from Chicago in the Prohibition era. See Horacio Verbitsky's devastating account. *Robo para la corona: los frutos prohibidos del árbol de la corrupción*, Buenos Aires 1991.

²⁷ A high point in the festivities after the PT victory in the presidential elections of 2002 was the party given by the former treasurer of the CUT, and of Lula's campaign. The press counted between 15 and 18 private jets and small aircraft landing at the *fazenda* where the party was held. Who could have known that workers owned so many planes?

²⁸ I broached this phenomenon in 'Medusa ou as Classes Médias e a Consolidação Democrática', in Guillermo O'Donnell and Fábio Reis, eds, *A Democracia no Brasil: Dilemmas e Perspectivas*, São Paulo 1988, where I considered the 'jellyfish' of appraisers an important part of the middle classes.

Viewed from another angle, the platypus presents us with the peculiarity that the main investment funds are the property of the workers. 'This is socialism!' a revenant from the first decades of the twentieth century would exclaim. But contrary to the hopes of some, the platypus lacks any ethico-political moment. Hegemony, in Gramsci's formulation, develops in the superstructure, and here the platypus has no 'consciousness', only superstructural replication. The theorist who foresaw it was Ridley Scott, with *Blade Runner*.

Such is the platypus. It is no longer possible to remain underdeveloped, and take advantage of the openings allowed by the Second Industrial Revolution; and it is equally impossible to progress by digital-molecular accumulation—the internal requirements for such a rupture are wanting. What remains are 'primitive accumulations' of the sort fostered by privatization. But under the dominance of finance capital, these are now mere transfers of property; not, properly speaking, 'accumulation'. The platypus is condemned to thrust everything into the vortex of financialization. Now, under the pr, it is the turn of social security, which will prevent it from redistributing income and creating a new market that would provide the bases for digital-molecular accumulation. The capitalist platypus is a truncated accumulation and an unremittingly inegalitarian society. Long live Marx and Darwin: the capitalist periphery has finally brought them together. Marx, who so wanted the approval of Darwin, who did not have time to read *Capital*. But was it not in these lands, in the Galapagos, that Darwin had his epiphany?

BOITEMPO

EDITORIAL



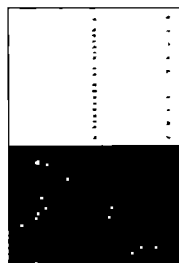
A NAVEGAÇÃO VENTUROSA

ensaios sobre Celso Furtado

Fortunate Voyage: Essays on Celso Furtado

Francisco de Oliveira

In this collection of essays on Celso Furtado—world-renowned Brazilian economist, author of more than thirty books and founder of an authentic third world theory—de Oliveira outlines his contributions to our understanding of Brazil, its development and underdevelopment.



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McDonald's, fetichismo e cultura descartável

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Iselde Fontenelle

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TROPICALISMO

Decadência bonita do samba

Tropicalism: the Attractive Decadence of Samba

Pedro Alexandre Sanches

In his analysis of Tropicalism and Brazilian popular music, Sanches argues that the arrival of postmodernism in Brazil can be traced back to 1967, with Glauber Rocha's film *Lula* or *Thema* and the emergence of the tropicalist movement.

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TARIQ ALI

REMEMBERING

EDWARD SAID

1935–2003

EDWARD SAID was a longstanding friend and comrade. We first met in 1972, at a seminar in New York. Even in those turbulent times, one of the features that distinguished him from the rest of us was his immaculate dress sense: everything was meticulously chosen, down to the socks. It is almost impossible to visualize him any other way. At a conference in his honour in Beirut in 1997, Edward insisted on accompanying Elias Khoury and myself for a swim. As he walked out in his swimming trunks, I asked why the towel did not match. 'When in Rome', he replied, airily; but that evening, as he read an extract from the Arabic manuscript of his memoir *Out of Place*, his attire was faultless. It remained so till the end, throughout his long battle with leukaemia.

Over the last eleven years one had become so used to his illness—the regular hospital stays, the willingness to undergo trials with the latest drugs, the refusal to accept defeat—that one began to think him indestructible. Last year, purely by chance, I met Said's doctor in New York. In response to my questions, he replied that there was no medical explanation for Edward's survival. It was his indomitable spirit as a fighter, his will to live, that had preserved him for so long. Said travelled everywhere. He spoke, as always, of Palestine, but also of the unifying capacities of the three cultures, which he would insist had a great deal in common. The monster was devouring his insides but those who came to hear him could not see the process, and we who knew preferred to forget. When the cursed cancer finally took him the shock was intense.

His quarrel with the political and cultural establishments of the West and the official Arab world is the most important feature of Said's biography. It was the Six Day War of 1967 that changed his life—prior to that event, he had not been politically engaged. His father, a Palestinian Christian, had emigrated to the United States in 1911, at the age of sixteen, to avoid being drafted by the Ottomans to fight in Bulgaria. He became an American citizen and served, instead, with the US military in France during the First World War. Subsequently he returned to Jerusalem, where Edward was born in 1935. Said never pretended to be a poverty-stricken Palestinian refugee as some detractors later alleged. The family moved to Cairo, where Wadie Said set up a successful stationery business and Edward was sent to an elite English-language school. His teenage years were lonely, dominated by a Victorian father, in whose eyes the boy required permanent disciplining, and an after-school existence devoid of friends. Novels became a substitute—Defoe, Scott, Kipling, Dickens, Mann. He had been named Edward after the Prince of Wales but, despite his father's monarchism, was despatched for his education not to Britain but to the United States, in 1951. Said would later write of hating his 'puritanical and hypocritical' New England boarding school: it was 'shattering and disorienting'. Until then, he thought he knew exactly who he was, 'moral and physical flaws' and all. In the United States he had to remake himself 'into something the system required'.

Watershed of 67

Nevertheless, he flourished in the Ivy League environment, first at Princeton and then Harvard where, as he later said, he had the privilege to be trained in the German philological tradition of comparative literature. Said began teaching at Columbia in 1963; his first book, on Conrad, was published three years later. When I asked him about it in New York in 1994, in a conversation filmed for Channel Four, he described his early years at Columbia between 1963 and 1967 as a 'Dorian Gray period':

TA: So one of you was the Comp Lit professor, going about his business, giving his lectures, working with Trilling and the others; yet at the same time, another character was building up inside you—but you kept the two apart?

ES: I had to. There was no place for that other character to be. I had effectively severed my connexion with Egypt. Palestine no longer existed. My family lived partly in Egypt and partly in Lebanon. I was a foreigner in both

places. I had no interest in the family business, so I was here. Until 1967, I really didn't think about myself as anything other than a person going about his work. I had taken in a few things along the way. I was obsessed with the fact that many of my cultural heroes—Edmund Wilson, Isaiah Berlin, Reinhold Niebuhr—were fanatical Zionists. Not just pro-Israeli: they said the most awful things about the Arabs, in print. But all I could do was note it. Politically, there was no place for me to go. I was in New York when the Six Day War broke out and was completely shattered. The world as I had understood it ended at that moment. I had been in the States for years but it was only now that I began to be in touch with other Arabs. By 1970 I was completely immersed in politics and the Palestinian resistance movement.¹

His 1975 work *Beginnings*—an epic engagement with the problems posed by the 'point of departure', which synthesized the insights of Auerbach, Vico, Freud with a striking reading of the modernist novel—and, above all, *Orientalism*, were the products of this conjuncture. Published in 1978, when Said was already a member of the Palestinian National Council, *Orientalism* combines the polemical vigour of the activist with the passion of the cultural critic. Like all great polemics, it eschews balance. I once told him that, for many South Asians, the problem with the early orientalist British scholars was not their imperialist ideology but, on the contrary, the fact that they were far too politically correct overawed by the Sanskrit texts they were translating. Said laughed, and insisted that the book was essentially an attempt to undercut the more fundamental assumptions of the West in relation to the Arab East. The 'discourse'—Foucault was, alas, an important influence—of the Orient, constructed in France and Britain during the two centuries that followed Napoleon's conquest of Egypt, had served both as an instrument of rule and to shore up a European cultural identity, by setting it off against the Arab world.² He had deliberately concentrated on the exoticization, vulgarization and distortions of the Middle East and its culture for that

¹ This, and following quotes, are from *A Conversation with Edward Said*, a Bandung Films production. The programme was recorded in his Riverside Drive apartment, on a day so humid that Said removed his jacket and tie as the cameras began to roll—creating much merriment in the household.

² Thus Lord Cromer, British consul-general in Egypt for some quarter of a century after 1881: 'The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician . . . The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry . . . He will often break down under the mildest process of cross-examination'. *Orientalism*, London 2003, p. 38.

reason. To portray imperialist suppositions as a universal truth was a lie, based on skewed and instrumentalist observations that were used in the service of Western domination.

Orientalism spawned a vast academic following. While Said was undoubtedly touched and flattered by the book's success, he was well aware of how it was misused and would often disclaim responsibility for its more monstrous offspring: 'How can anyone accuse me of denouncing "dead white males"? Everyone knows I love Conrad.' He would then go through a list of postmodernist critics, savaging each of them in turn for their stress on identity and hostility to narrative. 'Write it all down', I once told him. 'Why don't you?' came the reply. What we recorded was more restrained:

TA: The 1967 war radicalized you, pushed you in the direction of becoming a Palestinian spokesperson?

AS: Arab, at first, before Palestinian.

TA: And *Orientalism* grew out of that new commitment.

AS: I started to read, methodically, what was being written about the Middle East. It did not correspond to my experience. By the early seventies I began to realize that the distortions and misrepresentations were systematic, part of a much larger system of thought that was endemic to the West's whole enterprise of dealing with the Arab world. It confirmed my sense that the study of literature was essentially a historical task, not just an aesthetic one. I still believe in the role of the aesthetic; but the 'kingdom of literature'—'for its own sake'—is simply wrong. A serious historical investigation must begin from the fact that culture is hopelessly involved in politics. My interest has been in the great canonical literature of the West—read, not as masterpieces that have to be venerated, but as works that have to be grasped in their historical density, so they can resonate. But I also don't think you can do that without liking them; without caring about the books themselves.

Culture and Imperialism, published in 1993, extended the core arguments of *Orientalism* to describe a more general pattern of relationships between the metropolitan West and its overseas territories, beyond that of Europe and the Middle East. Written in a different political period, it attracted some vituperative attacks. There was a celebrated exchange in the *Times Literary Supplement* with Ernest Gellner—who thought Said should give 'at least some expression of gratitude' for imperialism's role as vehicle of modernity—in which neither side took prisoners. Later,

when Gellner attempted a reconciliation of sorts, Said was unforgiving: hatred must be pure to be effective and, here as elsewhere, he always gave as good as he got.

But by now, debates on culture had been overshadowed by events in Palestine. When I asked if the year 1917 meant anything to him, he replied without hesitation: 'Yes, the Balfour Declaration'. Said's writings on Palestine have a completely different flavour from anything else he wrote, passionate and biblical in their simplicity. This was his cause. In *The End of the Peace Process, Blaming the Victims* and some half-dozen other books, in his *al-Ahram* columns and his essays in this journal and the *London Review of Books*, the flame that had been ignited in 1967 burned ever brighter. He had helped a generation to understand the real history of Palestine and it was this position, as the true chronicler of his people and their occupied homeland, that won him respect and admiration throughout the world. The Palestinians had become the indirect victims of the European Judeocide of the Second World War, but few politicians in the West seemed to care. Said pricked their collective conscience and they did not like him for it.

Anti-Oslo

Two close friends whose advice he had often sought—Ibrahim Abu-Lughod and Eqbal Ahmad—had died within a few years of each other, in 1999 and 2001. Said missed them greatly, but their absence only made him more determined to continue his literary onslaught against the enemy. Though he had served for fourteen years as an independent member on the PNC, and helped to polish and redraft Arafat's address to the UN General Assembly in 1984, he became increasingly critical of the lack of strategic vision that typified most of the Palestinian leadership. Writing in the immediate aftermath of what he termed the 'fashion-show vulgarities' of Arafat and Rabin's handshake on the White House lawn, Said described the Oslo Accords—imposed on the vanquished by the United States and Israel, after the Gulf War of 1991—as 'an instrument of surrender, a Palestinian Versailles' offering only shrivelled Bantustans in exchange for a series of historic renunciations. Israel, meanwhile, had no reason to let go as long as Washington supplied it with arms and funds.' (Arafat's lieutenant Nabil Shaath,

³ *London Review of Books*, 21 October 1993.

echoing *Orientalism's* more reactionary critics, responded: 'He should stick to literary criticism. After all, Arafat would not deign to discuss Shakespeare'.) History has vindicated Said's analysis. One of his most scorching attacks on Arafat's leadership, published in 2001 in these pages and in *al-Ahram*, denounced Oslo as a mere repackaging of the occupation, 'offering a token 18 per cent of the lands seized in 1967 to the corrupt, Vichy-like authority of Arafat, whose mandate has essentially been to police and tax his people on Israel's behalf':

The Palestinian people deserve better. We have to say clearly that with Arafat and company in command, there is no hope . . . What the Palestinians need are leaders who are really with and of their people, who are actually doing the resisting on the ground, not fat cigar-chomping bureaucrats bent on preserving their business deals and renewing their VIP passes, who have lost all trace of decency or credibility . . . We need a united leadership capable of thinking, planning and taking decisions, rather than grovelling before the Pope or George Bush while the Israelis kill his people with impunity . . . The struggle for liberation from Israeli occupation is where every Palestinian worth anything now stands.⁴

Could Hamas provide a serious alternative? 'This is a protest movement against the occupation', Said told me:

In my opinion, their ideas about an Islamic state are completely inchoate, unconvincing to anybody who lives there. Nobody takes that aspect of their programme seriously. When you question them, as I have, both on the West Bank and elsewhere: 'What are your economic policies? What are your ideas about power stations, or housing?', they reply: 'Oh, we're thinking about that.' There is no social programme that could be labelled 'Islamic'. I see them as creatures of the moment, for whom Islam is an opportunity to protest against the current stalemate, the mediocrity and bankruptcy of the ruling party. The Palestinian Authority is now hopelessly damaged and lacking in credibility—like the Saudis and Egyptians, a client state for the us.

Behind the reiterated Israeli demands that the Authority crack down on Hamas and Islamic Jihad, he detected 'the hope that there will be something resembling a Palestinian civil war, a gleam in the eyes of the Israeli military. Yet in the final months of his life he could still celebrate the Palestinians' stubborn refusal to accept that they were, as the IDF Chief of Staff had described them, 'a defeated people', and saw signs for a more creative Palestinian politics in the National Political Initiative led

⁴ NLR 11, September–October 2001.

by Mostapha Barghuti: 'The vision here is not a manufactured provisional state on 40 per cent of the land, with the refugees abandoned and Jerusalem kept by Israel, but a sovereign territory liberated from military occupation by mass action involving Arabs and Jews wherever possible.'⁵

With his death, the Palestinian nation has lost its most articulate voice in the Northern hemisphere, a world where, by and large, the continuous suffering of the Palestinians is ignored. For official Israelis, they are *untermenschen*; for official Americans, they are all terrorists; for the venal Arab regimes they are a continuing embarrassment. In his last writings, Said vigorously denounced the war on Iraq and its many apologists. He argued for freedom, from violence and from lies. He knew that the dual occupation of Palestine and Iraq had made peace in the region even more remote. His voice is irreplaceable, but his legacy will endure. He has many lives ahead of him.

⁵ *London Review of Books*, 19 June 2003.

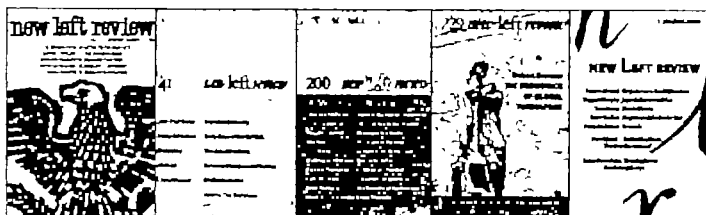
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GRAPHS, MAPS, TREES

Abstract Models for Literary History—1

What follows is the first of three interconnected articles, whose common purpose is to delineate a transformation in the study of literature. Literature, the old territory; but within it, a shift from the close reading of individual texts to the construction of abstract models. The models are drawn from three disciplines—quantitative history, geography and evolutionary theory: graphs, maps and trees—with which literary criticism has had little or no interaction; but which have many things to teach us, and may change the way we work.¹

I

The old historical paradigm, writes Krzysztof Pomian, 'directed the gaze of the historian towards extraordinary events . . . historians resembled collectors: both gathered only rare and curious objects, disregarding whatever looked banal, everyday, normal'.² What changed the situation, Pomian goes on, was the shift 'from exceptional events to the large mass of facts' introduced by the *Annales* school, and the present article tries to imagine what would happen if we, too, shifted our focus from exceptional texts to 'the large mass of [literary] facts'. It's an idea that occurred to me some years ago, when the study of national bibliographies made me realize what a minimal fraction of the literary field we all work on: a canon of two hundred novels, for instance, sounds very large for nineteenth-century Britain (and is much larger than the current one), but is still less than one per cent of the novels that were actually published: twenty thousand, thirty, more, no one really knows—and close reading won't help here, a novel a day every day of the year would take a century

or so . . . And then, a field this large cannot be understood by stitching together separate bits of knowledge about individual cases, because it *isn't* a sum of individual cases: it's a collective system, that should be grasped as such, as a whole—and the graphs that follow are one way to begin doing this. Or as Fernand Braudel put it in the lecture on history he gave to his companions in the German prison camp near Lüneburg:

An incredible number of dice, always rolling, dominate and determine each individual existence: uncertainty, then, in the realm of individual history; but in that of collective history . . . simplicity and consistency. History is indeed 'a poor little conjectural science' when it selects individuals as its objects . . . but much more rational in its procedures and results, when it examines groups and repetitions.¹

A more rational literary history. That is the idea.

II

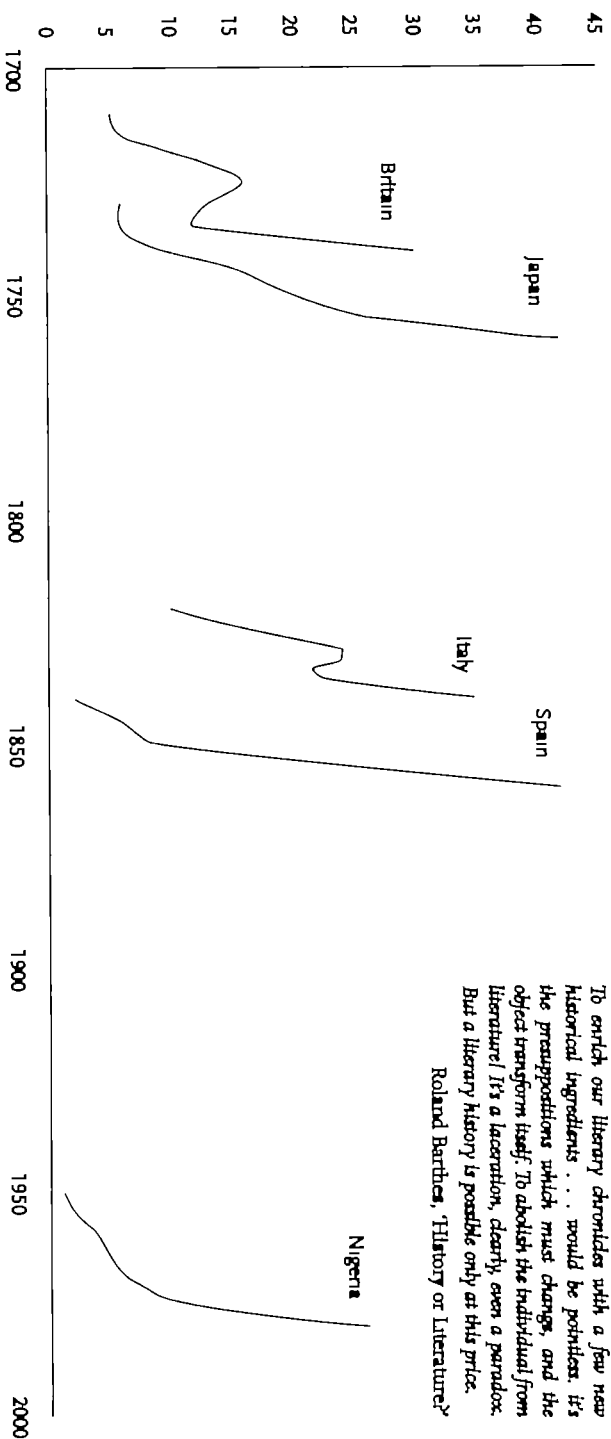
The quantitative approach to literature can take several different forms—from computational stylistics to thematic databases, book history, and more. For reasons of space, I will here limit myself to book history, building on work originally done by McBurney, Beasley, Raven, Garside and Block for Britain; Angus, Mylne and Frautschi for France; Zwicker for Japan; Petersen for Denmark; Ragone for Italy; Martí-Lopez and Santana for Spain; Joshi for India; and Griswold for Nigeria. And I mention these names right away because quantitative work is truly *cooperation*: not only in the pragmatic sense that it takes forever to gather the data, but because such data are ideally independent from any individual researcher, and can thus be shared by others, and combined in more than one way. Figure 1, which charts the take-off of the novel in Britain, Japan, Italy, Spain and Nigeria, is a case in point. See how similar those shapes are: five countries, three continents, over two centuries apart, and it's really the same pattern, the same old metaphor of the 'rise' of the novel come alive: in twenty years or so (in Britain, 1720–40; Japan,

¹ The articles were first imagined at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin, and presented in an early version as the Beckman Lectures at Berkeley, and then elsewhere. My thanks to the many people who have helped me to clarify my ideas.

² Krzysztof Pomian, 'L'histoire des structures', in Jacques Le Goff, Roger Chartier, Jacques Revel, eds, *La nouvelle histoire*, Paris 1978, pp. 115–6.

³ Fernand Braudel, 'L'histoire, mesure du monde', in *Les Ecrits de Fernand Braudel*, vol. II, Paris 1997.

FIGURE 1: The rise of the novel, 18th to 20th century



To enrich our literary chronicles with a few new historical ingredients . . . would be pointless. It's the presuppositions which must change, and the object transform itself. To abolish the individual from literature! It's a lacertation, clearly, even a paradox. But a literary history is possible only at this price.

Roland Barthes, 'History or Literature?'

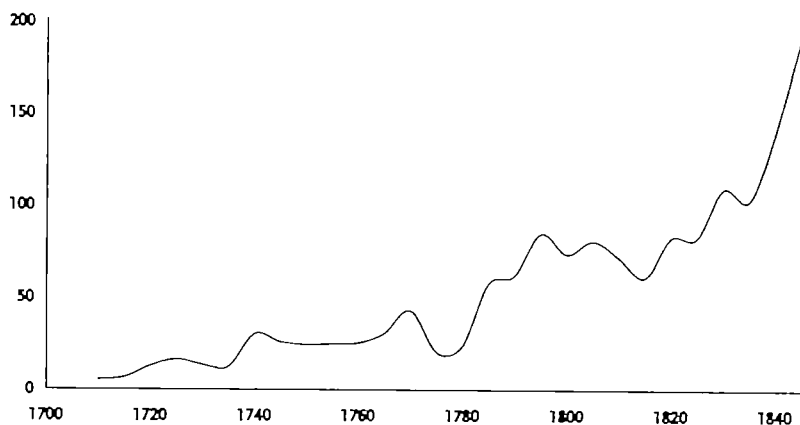
New novels per year, by 5-year average. Sources: For Britain: W. H. McBurney, *A Check List of English Prose Fiction, 1700-39*, Cambridge, ca 1960, and J. C. Beasley, *The Novels of the 1740s*, Athens, ca 1982, both partly revised by James Barrett, *British Fiction 1750-70: A Chronological Check-List of Prose Fiction Printed in Britain and Ireland*, London 1987. For Japan Jonathan Zwicker, *Il lungo Ottocento del romanzo giapponese*, in *Il romanzo*, vol. III, *Storie e geografie*, Torino 2002. For Italy Giovanni Ragone, *Italia 1815-70*, in *Il romanzo*, vol. III. For Spain: Elena Martín-López and Mario Santana, *Spagna 1845-1900*, *Il romanzo*, vol. III. For Nigeria Wendy Gribwold, *Nigeria 1950-2000*, *Il romanzo*, vol. III.

1745–65; Italy, 1820–40; Spain, 1845 to early 1860s; Nigeria, 1965–80), the graph leaps from five–ten new titles per year, which means one new novel every month or two, to one new novel *per week*. And at this point, the horizon of novel-reading changes. As long as only a handful of texts are published each year, that is, the novel is an unreliable commodity: it disappears for long stretches of time, and cannot really command the loyalty of the reading public; it resembles a fashion, more than a literary genre. With a new text every week, however, the novel becomes that great modern oxymoron of the *regular novelty*: the unexpected that consumers *expect* so often and eagerly that they can no longer do without it. The novel ‘becomes a necessity of life’, to paraphrase a book by William Gilmore-Lehne, and the jeremiads that immediately multiply around it—novels make readers lazy, dissolute, insane, insubordinate: just like films two centuries later—are the sign of its symbolic triumph.

III

The rise of the novel, then; or, better, *one* rise in a history which had begun many centuries earlier, and will go through several other accelerations, as emerges quite clearly from the data on the publication of new novels in Britain between 1710 and 1850 (figure 2). Here, three phases

FIGURE 2: *The three rises of the British novel*



New novels per year, by 5-year average. Sources. McBurney, *Check List of English Prose Fiction, 1700–39*. Beasley, *The Novels of the 1740s*, Raven, *British Fiction 1750–70*, Peter Garside, James Raven and Rainer Schwoerling, eds, *The English Novel 1770–1829*, 2 vols, Oxford 2000, Andrew Block, *The English Novel, 1740–1850*, London 1961.

seem to stand out, each subdivided into a first period of rapid growth and a second one of stabilization, and each modifying in a specific way the social role of the novel. The first phase, from 1720 to around 1770, is the one discussed above: a leap in 1720–40, and a consolidation in the following decades. In the second phase, which runs from 1770 to around 1820, the further increase in the number of new titles induces for its part a drastic reorientation of audiences towards the present. Up to then, I mean, the 'extensive' reading so typical of the novel—reading many texts once and superficially, rather than a few texts often and intensely—would easily outgrow the yearly output of titles, forcing readers to turn to the past for (much of) their entertainment: all sorts of reprints and abridgements of eighteenth-century bestsellers, British as well as foreign, plus the old, and even the few ancient classics of the genre. But as the total of new novels doubles, compared to the previous phase—80 in 1788; 91 in 1796; 111 in 1808—the popularity of old books suddenly collapses, and novelistic audiences turn resolutely (and irreversibly) towards the current season.⁴

The third phase, which begins around 1820, and which unfortunately I can only follow for the first thirty years, is the one in which the *internal composition* of the market changes. So far, the typical reader of novels had been a 'generalist'—someone 'who reads absolutely anything, at random', as Thibaudet was to write with a touch of contempt in *Le liseur de romans*.⁵ Now, however, the growth of the market creates all sorts of niches for 'specialist' readers and genres (nautical tales, sporting novels, school stories, *mystères*): the books aimed at urban workers in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, or at boys, and then girls, in the following generation, are simply the most visible instances of this larger process, which culminates at the turn of the century in the super-niches of detective fiction and then science fiction.

Abstract models for literary history . . . and we certainly have abstraction here (*Pamela*, *The monk*, *The wild Irish girl*, *Persuasion*, *Oliver Twist*—

⁴ 'In Italy,' writes Giovanni Ragone, 'in the first twenty years of the nineteenth century virtually all the bestsellers of the previous century disappear', 'Italia 1815–1870', in *Il romanzo*, vol. III, pp. 343–54. A similar shift seems to occur in France, where, however, the caesura of the revolution offers a very strong alternative explanation. The 'pastness of the past' is of course the key message of the two genres—gothic, and then historical novels—most responsible for the turn towards the present.

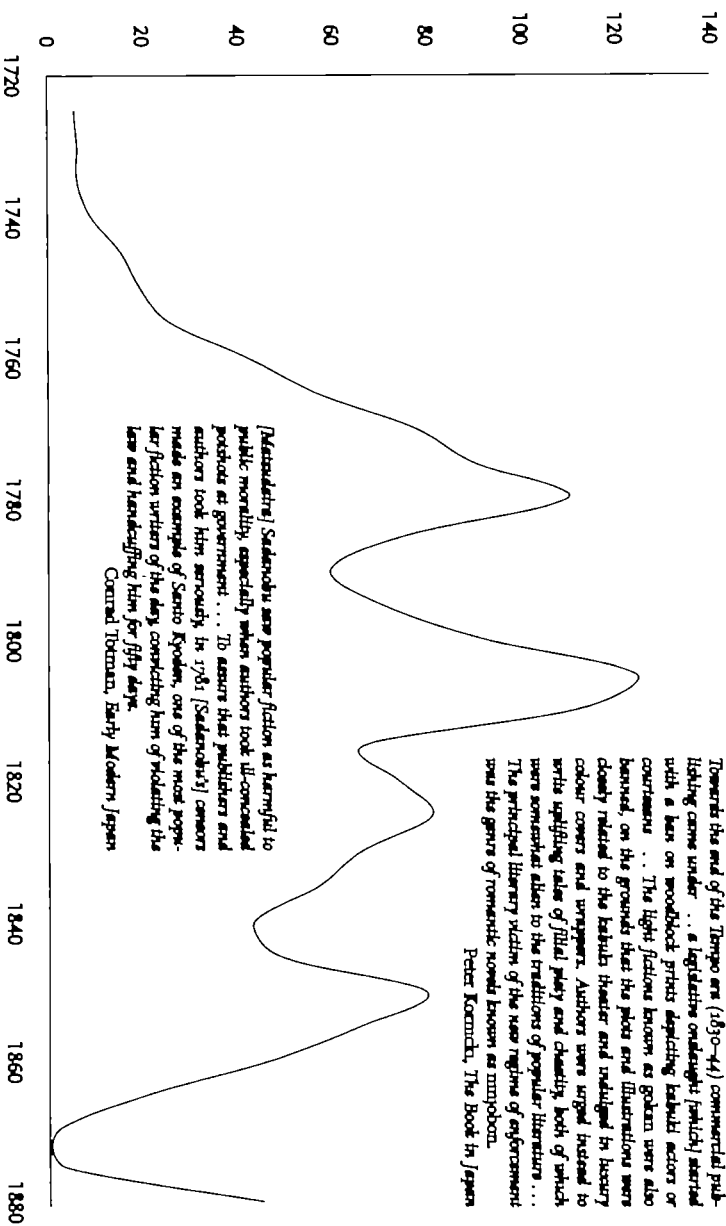
⁵ Albert Thibaudet, *Il lettore di romanzi* [1925], Napoli 2000, p. 49.

where are they? Five tiny dots in the graph of figure 2). But graphs are not *models*; they are not simplified versions of a theoretical structure in the way maps and (especially) evolutionary trees will be in the next two articles. Quantitative research provides a type of data which is ideally independent of interpretations, I said earlier, and that is of course also its limit: it provides *data*, not interpretation. That figure 2 shows a first 'rise' (when the novel becomes a necessity of life), and then a second (the shift from the past to the present), and then a third (the multiplication of market niches), seems to me a good account of the data, but is certainly far from inevitable. Quantitative data can tell us when Britain produced one new novel per month or week or day, or hour for that matter, but where the significant turning points lie along the continuum—and why—is something that must be decided on a different basis.

IV

A—multiple—rise of the novel. But with an interesting twist, which is particularly visible in the Japanese case of figure 3: after the rise from one novel per month in the mid-1740s to one per week twenty years later (and even more in the following years: between 1750 and 1820, in fact, many more novels are published in Japan than in Britain; a fact which deserves a good explanation)—several equally rapid downturns occur in 1780–90, the 1810s to the 1830s, and in 1860–70. The fall of the novel. And the reason behind the downturns seems to be always the same: politics: a direct, virulent censorship during the Kansei and Tempō periods, and an indirect influence in the years leading up to the Meiji Restoration, when there was no specific repression of the book trade, and the crisis was thus probably due to a more general dissonance between the rhythm of political crises and the writing of novels. It's the same in Denmark during the Napoleonic wars (figure 4, overleaf), or in France and Italy (better, Milan) in comparable situations (figure 5): after 1789, the publication of French novels drops about 80 per cent; after the first Risorgimento war, the Milanese downturn is around 90 per cent, with only 3 novels published in the course of 1849, against 43 in 1842. The only exception I know to this pattern is the import of British books into India charted by Priya Joshi (figure 6), which rises sharply after the 1857 rebellion; but as Joshi points out, the logic of a colonial relationship is reversed, and the peak is a sign of Britain suddenly accelerating the pace of symbolic hegemony; then, once the crisis is over, the flow returns to its pre-1857 levels.

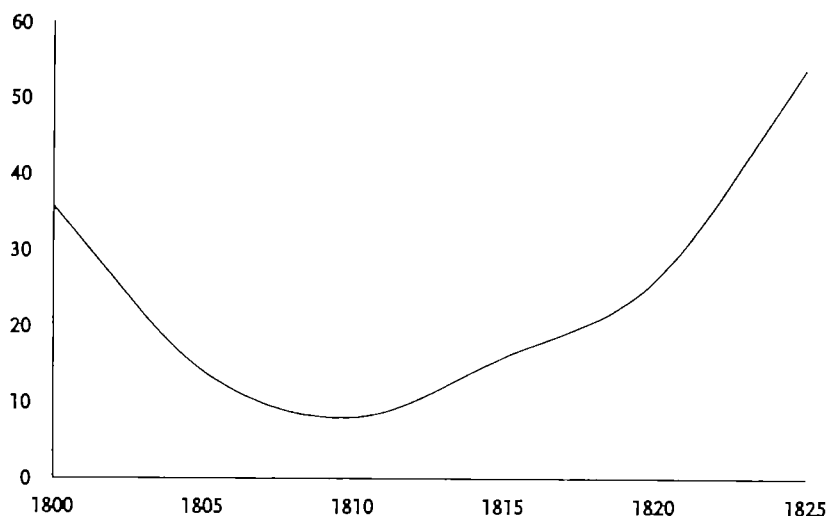
FIGURE 3: *The fall of the novel: Japan*



New novels per year, by 5-year average. Source: Jonathan Zenzke, 'Ilunga Otocomo idô romanzo gairyômei', in *Il romanzo*, vol. III.

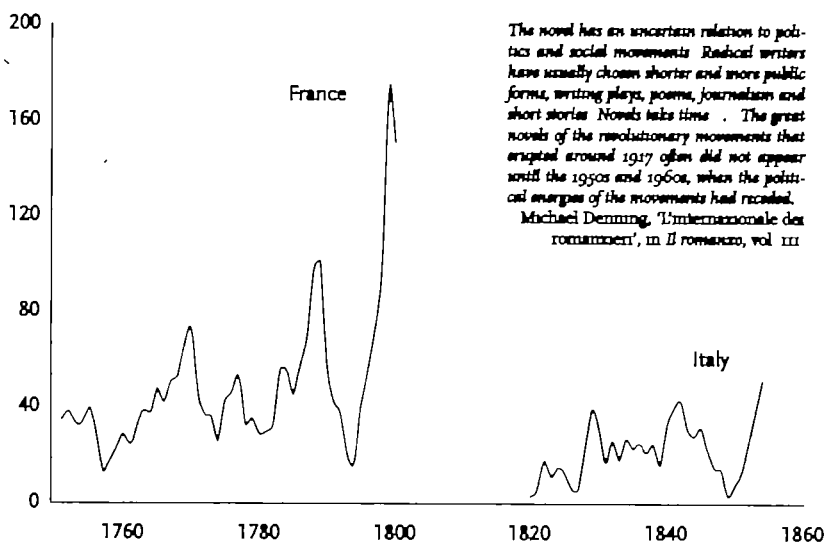
See also Tokman, *Barry Modern Japan*, Berkeley 1993; Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*, Leiden 1998.

FIGURE 4: *The fall of the novel: Denmark*



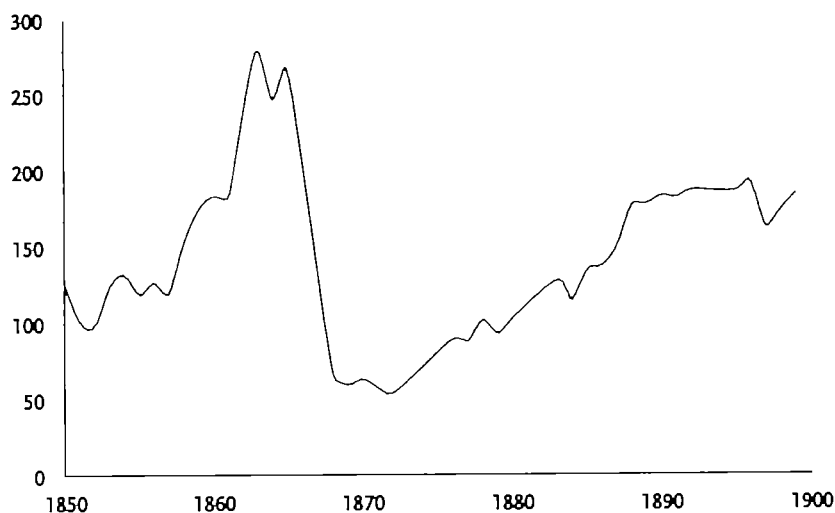
New novels per year, by 5-year average. Source: Erland Munch-Petersen, *Die Übersetzungsliteratur als Unterhaltung des romantischen Lesers*, Wiesbaden 1991.

FIGURE 5: *The fall of the novel: France, Italy*



New novels per year, by 5-year average. Sources: For France Angus Martin, Vivienne G. Mylne and Richard Frauthehn, eds, *Bibliographie du genre romanesque français 1751-1800*, Paris 1977. For Milan Giovanni Ragone, 'Italia 1815-70', in *Il romanzo*, vol. III, and *Catalogo dei libri italiani dell'Ottocento*, Milano 1991.

FIGURE 6: *Book imports into India*



Thousands of pounds sterling. Source: Priya Joshi, *In Another Country Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India*, New York 2002.

V

An antipathy between politics and the novel. Still, it would be odd if *all* crises in novelistic production had a political origin: the French downturn of the 1790s was sharp, true, but there had been others in the 1750s and 1770s—as there had been in Britain, for that matter, notwithstanding its greater institutional stability. The American and the Napoleonic wars may well be behind the slumps of 1775–83 and 1810–17 (which are clearly visible in figure 2), write Raven and Garside in their splendid bibliographic studies; but then they add to the political factor ‘a decade of poorly produced novels’, ‘reprints’, the possible ‘greater relative popularity . . . of other fictional forms’, ‘a backlash against low fiction’, the high cost of paper . . .⁶ And as possible causes multiply, one

⁶ James Raven, ‘Historical Introduction: the Novel Comes of Age’, and Peter Garside, ‘The English Novel in the Romantic Era: Consolidation and Dispersal’, in Garside, Raven and Schöwerling, eds, *The English Novel 1770–1829*, 2 vols, Oxford 2000; vol. I, p. 27, and vol. II, p. 44.

wonders: what are we trying to explain here—two *unrelated individual events*, or two moments in a *recurring pattern of ups and downs*? Because if the downturns are individual events, then looking for individual causes (Napoleon, reprints, the cost of paper, whatever) makes perfect sense; but if they are parts of a pattern, then what we must explain is *the pattern as a whole*, not just one of its phases.

The whole pattern; or, as some historians would say, the whole cycle: 'An increasingly clear idea has emerged . . . of the multiplicity of time', writes Braudel in the essay on *longue durée*.

Traditional history, with its concern for the short time span, for the individual and the event, has long accustomed us to the headlong, dramatic, breathless rush of its narrative . . . The new economic and social history puts cyclical movement in the forefront of its research . . . large sections of the past, ten, twenty, fifty years at a stretch . . . Far beyond this . . . we find a history capable of traversing even greater distances . . . to be measured in centuries . . . the long, even the very long time span, the *longue durée*.⁷

Event, cycle, *longue durée*: three time frames which have fared very unevenly in literary studies. Most critics are perfectly at ease with the first one, the circumscribed domain of the event and of the individual case; most theorists are at home at the opposite end of the temporal spectrum, in the very long span of nearly unchanging structures. But the middle level has remained somewhat unexplored by literary historians; and it's not even that we don't work within that time frame, it's that we haven't yet fully understood its specificity: the fact, I mean, that cycles constitute *temporary structures within the historical flow*. That is after all the hidden logic behind Braudel's tripartition: the short span is all flow and no structure, the *longue durée* all structure and no flow, and cycles are the—unstable—border country between them. Structures, because they introduce repetition in history, and hence regularity, order, pattern; and temporary, because they're short (ten, twenty, fifty years, this depends on the theory).

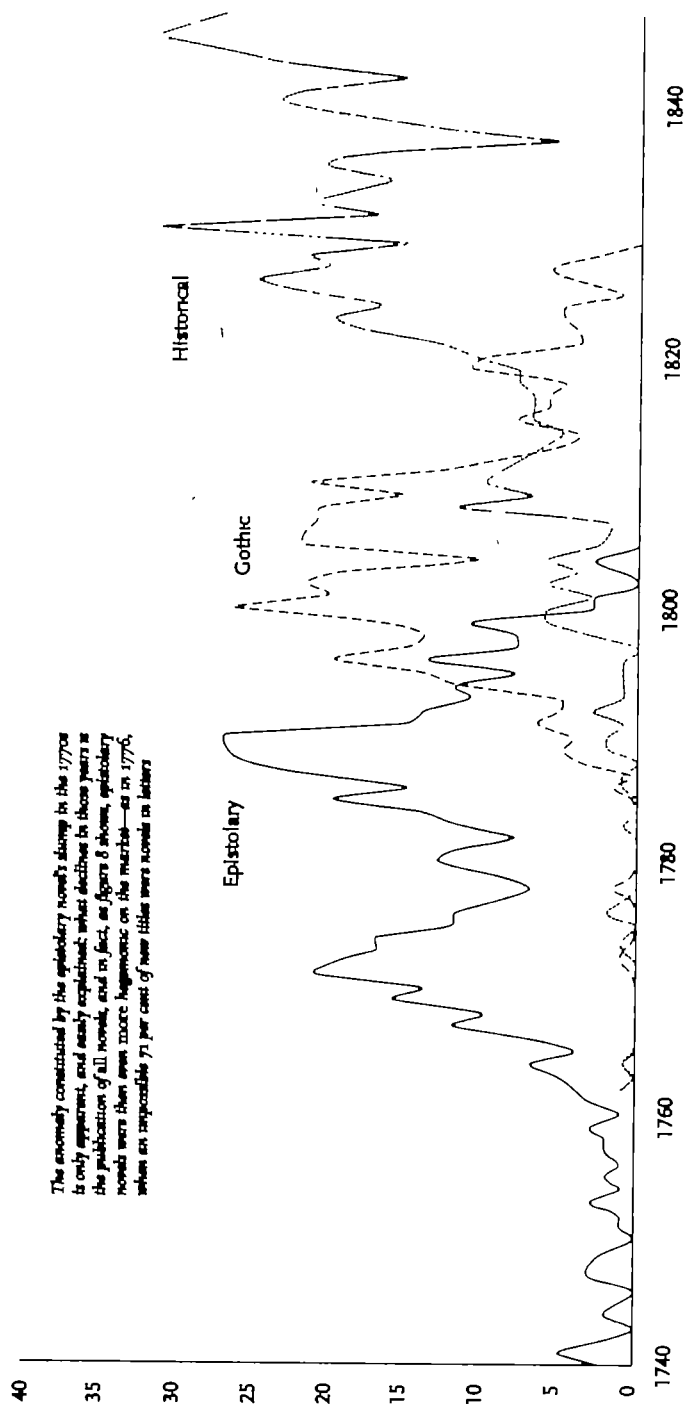
Now, 'temporary structures' is also a good definition for—genres: morphological arrangements that *last* in time, but always only for *some* time. Janus-like creatures, with one face turned to history and the other

⁷ Fernand Braudel, 'History and the Social Sciences. The *longue durée*', in *On History*, Chicago 1980, p. 27. The first extended treatment of economic cycles was of course Nikolai Kondratiev's *The Long Wave Cycle*, written between 1922 and 1928.

to form, genres are thus the true protagonists of this middle layer of literary history—this more ‘rational’ layer where flow and form meet. It’s the regularity of figures 7 and 8 (overleaf), with their three waves of epistolary novels from 1760 to 1790, and then gothic novels from 1790 to 1815, and then historical novels from 1815 to the 1840s. Each wave produces more or less the same number of novels per year, and lasts the same 25–30 years, and each also rises only after the previous wave has begun to ebb away (see how the up- and downward trends intersect around 1790 and 1815). ‘The new form makes its appearance to replace an old form that has outlived its artistic usefulness’, writes Shklovsky, and the decline of a ruling genre seems indeed here to be the necessary precondition for its successor’s take-off. Which may explain those odd ‘latency periods’ in the early history of genres: *Pamela* is published in 1740, and *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, but very few epistolary or gothic novels are written until 1760 and 1790 respectively. Why the lag? because as long as a hegemonic form has not lost its ‘artistic usefulness’, there is not much that a rival form can do: there can always be an exceptional text, yes, but the exception *will not change the system*. It’s only when Ptolemaic astronomy begins to generate one ‘monstrosity’ after another, writes Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, that ‘the time comes to give a competitor a chance’—and the same is true here: a historical novel written in 1800, such as *Castle Rackrent* (or in 1805, like *Waverley*’s abandoned first draft) simply didn’t have the incredible opportunity to reshape the literary field that the collapse of the gothic offered *Waverley* in 1814.⁸

⁸ A few more words on why a form loses its ‘artistic usefulness’ and disappears. For Shklovsky, the reason is the purely inner dialectic of art, which begins in creative estrangement, and ends in stale automatism: ‘Each art form travels down the inevitable road from birth to death; from seeing and sensory perception, when every detail in the object is savoured and relished, to mere recognition, when form becomes a dull epigone which our senses register mechanically, a piece of merchandise not visible even to the buyer.’ (The passage is from an article collected in *The Knight’s Move*, and is quoted by Victor Erlich in *Russian Formalism*, New Haven 1955, p. 252.) The process is, however, open to a ‘Kuhnian’ reading, where a genre exhausts its potentialities—and the time comes to give a competitor a chance—when its inner form can no longer represent the most significant aspects of contemporary reality: at which point, either the genre betrays its form in the name of reality, thereby disintegrating, or it betrays reality in the name of form, becoming a ‘dull epigone’ indeed. (I develop this point in the appendix to the new edition of *The Way of the World*, “A useless longing for myself”: The crisis of the European *Bildungsroman*, 1898–1914’, London 2000.) But we will soon see another, more draconian explanation for the disappearance of forms.

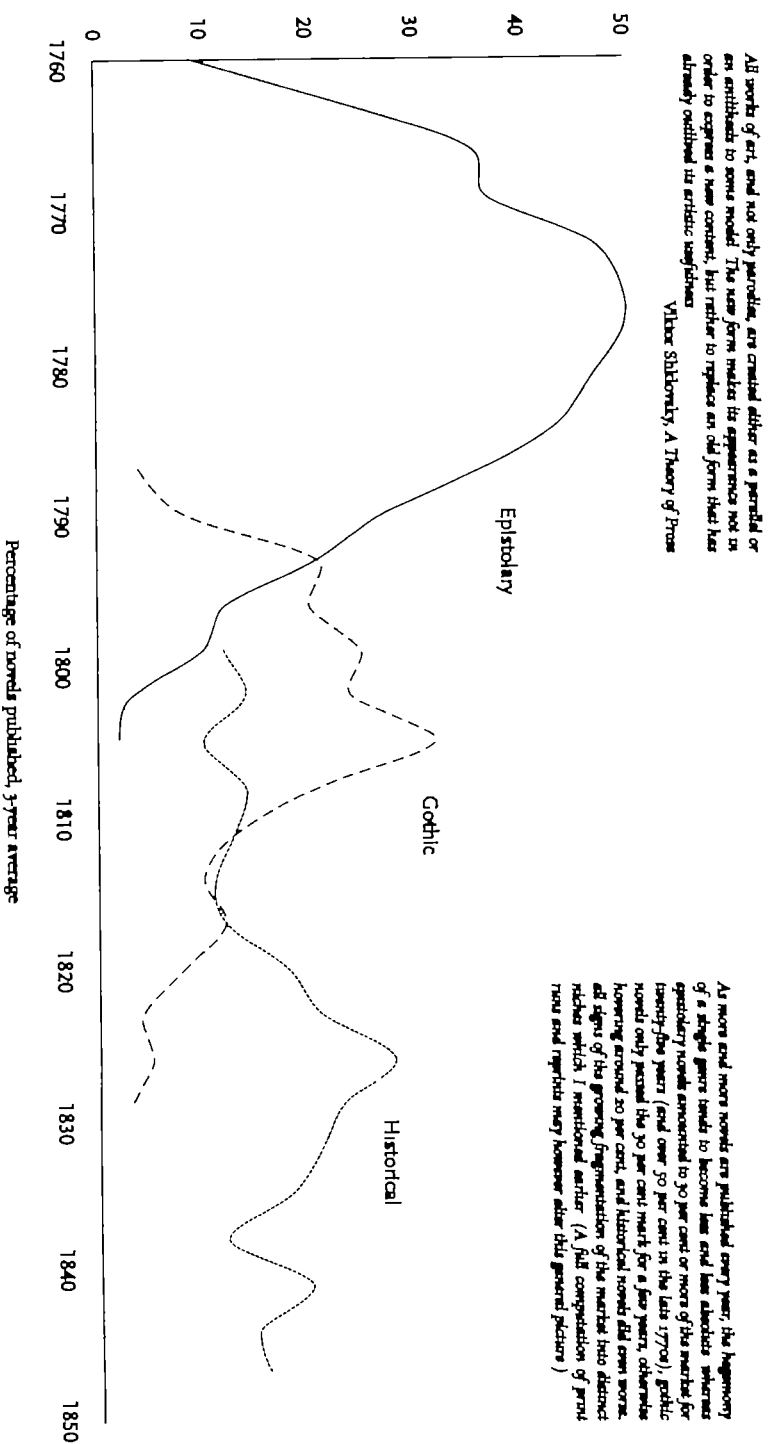
FIGURE 7: British hegemonic forms, 1760–1850



The enormity constituted by the epistolary novel's slump in the 1770s is only apparent, and easily explained: what declines in those years is the publication of all novels, and in fact, as figure 8 shows, epistolary novels were then even more hegemonic on the market—as in 1776, when an respectable 71 per cent of new titles were novels in letters.

New novels per year. Sources: For the epistolary novel: James Raven, 'Gran Bretaña 1750–1830', in *El romance*, vol. III, pp. 311–2. For the gothic novel: Maurice Lévy, *La roman 'gotique' anglais*, Paris 1995. For the historical novel, I have taken as the basis the checklist provided by Ramer Schoeweling (Sir Walter Scott and the tradition of the historical novel before 1814', in Uwe Boker, Manfred Markau, Ramer Schoeweling, eds, *The Living Middle Ages*, Stuttgart 1989), and subtracted those texts that also appear in Lévy's bibliography of the Gothic, for the later period, I have also used Block, *The English novel, 1740–1850*.

FIGURE 8: Market quotas of British hegemonic forms, 1760-1850



VI

From individual cases to series; from series to cycles, and then to genres as their morphological embodiment. And these three genres seem indeed to follow a rather regular 'life-cycle', as some economists would call it. These genres—or *all* genres? Is this wave-like pattern a sort of hidden pendulum of literary history?

Here, the gathering of data is obviously crucial, and I decided to rely entirely on other people's work: since we are all eager to find what we are looking for, using the evidence gathered by other scholars, with completely different research programmes, is always a good corrective to one's desires. So, first Brad Pasanek, at Stanford, and then I, consulted over a hundred studies of British genres between 1740 and 1900; there were some dubious cases, of course, and some (not very significant) disagreements in periodization;⁹ and although this is still very much work-in-progress, especially at the two ends of the temporal spectrum, the forty-four genres of figure 9 provide a large enough set to support some reflections.

Forty-four genres over 160 years; but instead of finding one new genre every four years or so, over two thirds of them cluster in just thirty years, divided in six major bursts of creativity: the late 1760s, early 1790s, late 1820s, 1850, early 1870s, and mid-late 1880s. And the genres also tend to *disappear* in clusters: with the exception of the turbulence of 1790–1810, a rather regular changing of the guard takes place, where half a dozen genres quickly leave the scene, as many move in, and then remain in place for twenty-five years or so. Instead of changing all the time and a little at a time, then, the system stands still for decades, and is then 'punctuated' by brief bursts of invention: forms change once, rapidly, across the board, and then repeat themselves for two–three decades: 'normal literature', we could call it, in analogy to Kuhn's normal science. Or think of Jauss's 'horizon of expectations': a metaphor we tend to evoke only 'negatively'—when a text transcends the given horizon—and which graphs present instead, 'positively', for what it is: figures 7–8 showing the strength of the hegemonic horizon, figure 9 its internal multiplicity, and so on. What graphs make us see, in

⁹ When specialists disagreed, I always opted for the periodization arising out of the more convincing morphological argument: in the case of industrial novels, for instance, I followed Gallagher rather than Cazamian, although the latter's periodization of 1830–50 would have fitted my argument much better than Gallagher's 1832–67. For details, see 'Note on the Taxonomy of the Forms', p. 91.

FIGURE 9: *British novelistic genres, 1740–1900*



For sources, see 'Note on the Taxonomy of the Forms', page 91.

other words, are the constraints and the inertia of the literary field—the *limits of the imaginable*. They, too, are part of history.

VII

Normal literature remains in place for twenty-five years or so . . . But where does this rhythm come from? Shklovsky's hypothesis (however modified) cannot explain it, because the connexion between the decline of an old form and the rise of a new one implies nothing about the regularity of the replacement. And widespread regularity: not just the few hegemonic genres, but (almost) all genres active at any given time seem to arise and disappear together according to some hidden rhythm.

The simultaneity of the turnover, at first so uncanny, is probably the key to the solution. When one genre replaces another, it's reasonable to assume that the cause is internal to the two genres, and historically specific: amorous epistolary fiction being ill-equipped to capture the traumas of the revolutionary years, say—and gothic novels being particularly good at it. But when several genres disappear *together* from the literary field, and then another group, and so on, then the reason has to be different, because all these forms cannot have run *independently and simultaneously* into insoluble problems—it would be simply too much of a coincidence. The causal mechanism must thus be *external* to the genres, and *common* to all: like a sudden, total change of their ecosystem. Which is to say: a change of their audience. Books survive if they are read and disappear if they aren't: and when an entire generic system vanishes at once, the likeliest explanation is that *its readers vanished at once*.

This, then, is where those 25–30 years come from: generations. Not a concept I am very fond of, actually, but the only one that seems to make sense of figure 9. And indeed, in Mannheim's great essay of 1927, the best evidence for his thesis comes precisely from the aesthetic sphere: 'a rhythm in the sequence of generations', he writes, following Mentré's *Les générations sociales*, published a few years earlier,

is far more apparent in the realm of the *séries libres*—free human groupings such as salons and literary circles—than in the realm of the institutions, which for the most part lay down a lasting pattern of behaviour, either by prescriptions or by the organization of collective undertakings, thus preventing the new generation from showing its originality . . . The

aesthetic sphere is perhaps the most appropriate to reflect overall changes of mental climate.¹⁰

Overall changes of the mental climate; the five, six shifts in the British novelistic field between 1740 and 1900. But since people are born every day, not every twenty-five years, on what basis can the biological continuum be segmented into discrete units? Mannheim again:

Whether a *new generation style* emerges every year, every thirty, every hundred years, or whether it emerges rhythmically at all, depends entirely on the trigger action of the social and cultural process . . . We shall therefore speak of a *generation as an actuality* only where a concrete bond is created between members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic destabilization.¹¹

A bond due to a process of dynamic destabilization; and one who was eighteen in 1968 understands. But again, this cannot possibly explain the *regularity* of generational replacement, unless one assumes—absurdly—that the ‘destabilizations’ themselves occur regularly every twenty-five or thirty years. And so, I close on a note of perplexity: *faute de mieux*, some kind of generational mechanism seems the best way to account for the regularity of the novelistic cycle—but ‘generation’ is itself a very questionable concept. Clearly, we must do better.¹²

VIII

Normal literature remains in place for a generation or so . . . It's the central group of figure 10 (overleaf), which rearranges the forty-four

¹⁰ Karl Mannheim, ‘The problem of generations’, in *Essays on the sociology of knowledge*, London 1952, p. 279.

¹¹ *Essays on the sociology of knowledge*, pp. 303, 310.

¹² A possible solution: at some point, a particularly significant ‘destabilization’ gives rise to a clearly defined generation, which occupies centre stage for 20–30 years, attracting within its orbit, and shaping after its mould, slightly younger or older individuals. Once biological age pushes this generation to the periphery of the cultural system, there is suddenly room for a new generation, which comes into being simply *because it can*, destabilization or not; and so on, and on. A regular series would thus emerge even without a ‘trigger action’ for each new generation: once the generational clock has been set in motion, it will run its course—for some time at least. (This is in fact Mentre’s approach to the problem, especially in the long chapter in which he sketches an unbroken series of generations throughout French literature from 1515 to 1915.)

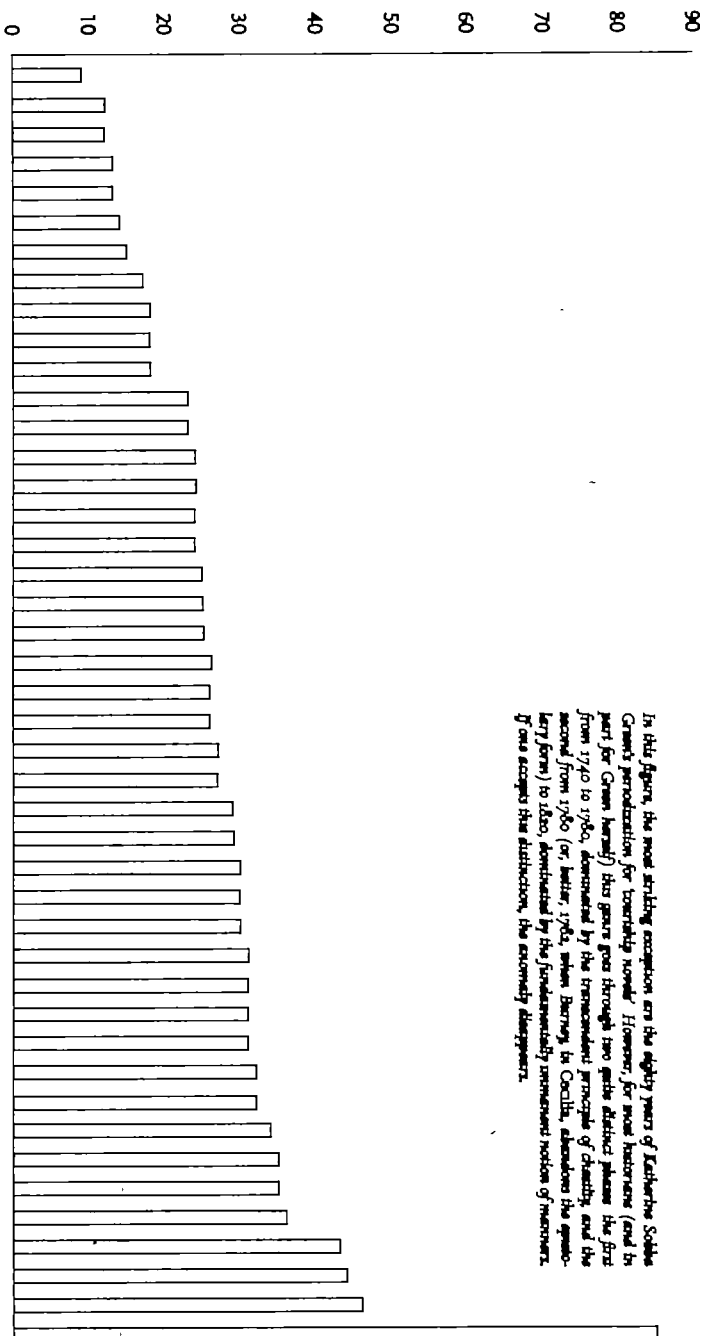
genres according to their duration, and where about two thirds of them last indeed between 23 and 35 years.¹³ The one large exception is formed by those genres—nine years, ten, twelve—on the left end of the spectrum: why so short-lived? Almost certainly, because of politics again: Jacobin, anti-Jacobin, evangelical novels around the turn of the century, Chartist and religious narratives in the 1840s, New Woman novels in the 1890s . . . And as often happens with politics and the novel, the outcome is a string of explicit ideological declarations: Jacobin novels trying to reform their villains by ‘discussion and reasoning’, as Gary Kelly puts it; Right Reason, adds Marilyn Butler in *Jane Austen and the war of ideas*: a ‘puzzling’ choice, she goes on, the great ‘missed opportunity’ of the Jacobin novel as a form. Missed opportunity, yes, but puzzling, perhaps not: if a novel wants to engage the political sphere directly, a series of unambiguous statements, however narratively dull, is a perfectly rational choice. And then, ideological exchanges are an easy way to capture Braudel’s ‘dramatic rush of the event’: to turn a book into *A tale of the times*, *A tale of the day*, *The philosophy of the day*, to quote some typical 1790s sub-titles. But the conjunction of course works both ways: if what most attracts readers is the drama of the day, then, once the day is over, so is the novel . . .

IX

Why did most British genres last 25–30 years, then, but some of them only ten? Because these ‘political’ forms subordinated narrative logic to the tempo of the short span, I have conjectured, and thus they also disappeared with the short span; and I hope the answer sounds plausible. But the real point, here, is less the specific answer, than the total *heterogeneity of problem and solution*: to make sense of quantitative data, I had to abandon the quantitative universe, and turn to morphology: evoke

¹³ A first look at French literature from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century suggests that most of its narrative genres have a similar 30-year span: pastoral and heroic novels, the *nouvelle historique*, *romans galants* and *contes philosophiques*, sentimental novels, the *Bildungsroman*, the *roman gai*, the two main phases (‘heroic’ and ‘sentimental’) of the *roman-feuilleton* . . . On the other hand, Sandra Guardini Vasconcelos and other Brazilian literary historians have pointed out that when a country imports most of its novels, the regular turnover of the Anglo-French generations is replaced by a much more accelerated and possibly uneven tempo. If they are right—and I think they are—then the Western European case would once more be the exception rather than the rule of world literature.

FIGURE 10: British novelistic genres, 1740–1915 (duration in years)



In this figure, the most striking exception are the eight years of Katherine Sedgwick's periodization for 'literary novel'. However, for most historians (and in part for Green himself) this genre goes through two quite distinct phases: the first from 1740 to 1780, dominated by the transcendent principle of charity, and the second from 1780 (or, better, 1784, when *Barnaby Rudge* in Coombe abandons the epistolary form) to 1840, dominated by the fundamentally intransigent notion of marriage. If one accepts this distinction, the anomaly disappears.

For sources, see 'Note on the Taxonomy of the Forms', page 91.

form, to explain figures. When I studied the impact of American films in 'Planet Hollywood' (NLR 9), I found the same problem: the findings showed quite clearly that American comedies were relatively unsuccessful abroad (figure II), but since they offered no hint as to why this was so, the only way to make sense of them was a formal hypothesis: as contemporary comedies made large use of jokes, and jokes seldom survive in translation, American comedies were quite simply *a lot less funny* in Japanese or Egyptian or Spanish than in English. (Not for nothing, the great international age of comic films—Chaplin, Keaton, Lloyd, Laurel and Hardy—coincided with silent cinema.)¹⁴

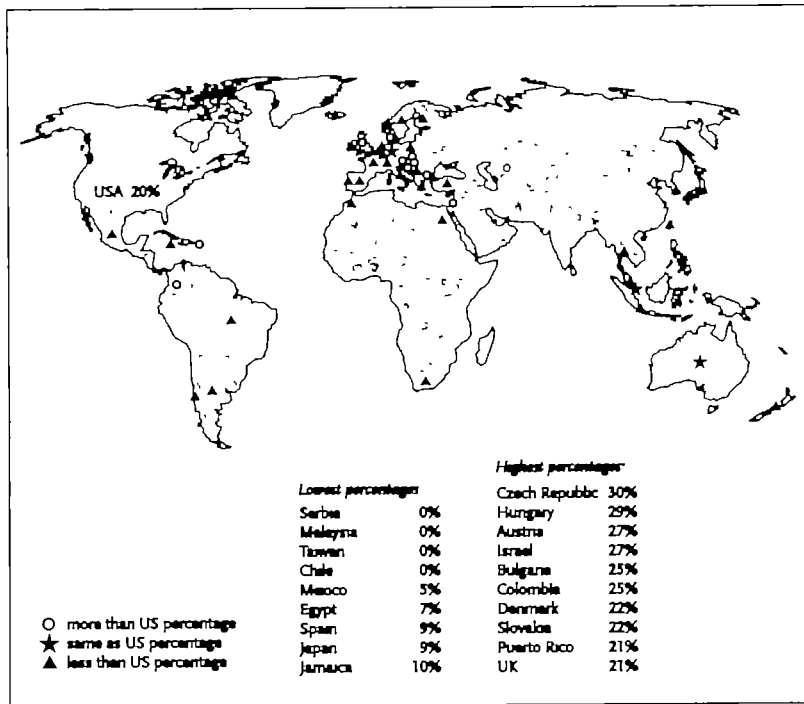
Quantification poses the problem, then, and form offers the solution. But let me add: if you are lucky. Because the asymmetry of a quantitative *explanandum* and a qualitative *explanans* leaves you often with a perfectly clear problem—and no idea of a solution. In 'Planet Hollywood', for instance, it turned out that absolutely *all* Italian box office hits of the sample decade were comedies; why that was so, however, was completely unclear. I felt I had to say something, so I presented an 'explanation', and NLR indulgently printed it, but it was silly of me, because the most interesting aspect of those data was that *I had found a problem for which I had absolutely no solution*. And problems without a solution are exactly what we need in a field like ours, where we are used to asking only those questions for which we already have an answer. 'I have noticed,' says Brecht's Herr Keuner, 'that we put many people off our teaching because we have an answer to everything. Could we not, in the interest of propaganda, draw up a list of the questions that appear to us completely unsolved?'

X

Two brief theoretical conclusions. The first is again on the cycle as the hidden thread of literary history. 'For the elevation of the novel to occur', writes William Warner in *Licensing Entertainment*, 'the novel of

¹⁴ See here how a quantitative history of literature is also a profoundly formalist one—especially at the beginning and at the end of the research process. At the end, because it must account for the data; and at the beginning, because a formal concept is usually what makes quantification possible in the first place: since a series must be composed of homogeneous objects, a morphological category is needed—'novel', 'anti-jacobin novel', 'comedy', etc.—to establish such homogeneity.

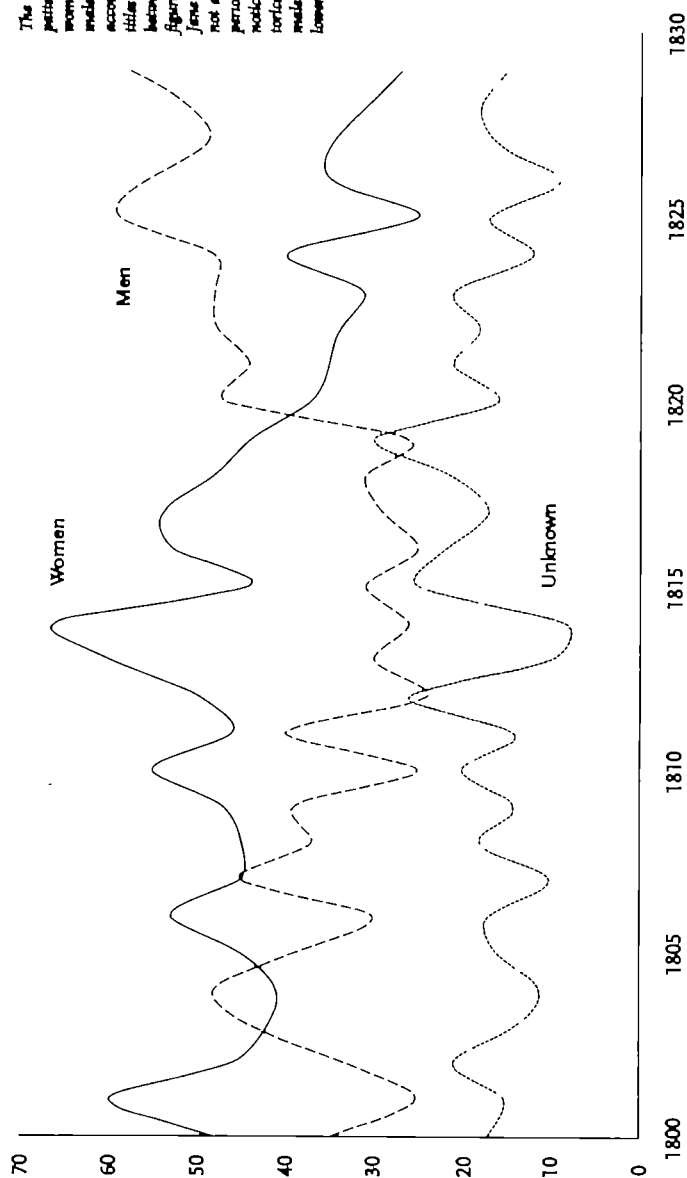
FIGURE II: US comedies as a percentage of top five box-office hits, 1986–95



amorous intrigue must . . . disappear'; it is 'the Great Gender Shift' of the mid-eighteenth century, adds April Alliston: the disappearance of earlier fiction by women writers, and a related increase in the number of male novelists. And it's all true, except for the article: *the* shift? The third quarter of the nineteenth century, write Tuchman and Fortin in *Edging Women Out*, was 'the period of invasion' of the novelistic field by male authors, who eventually 'edge out' their female competitors.¹⁵ But, clearly, a mid-Victorian 'invasion' presupposes a reversal of the gender shift of the 1740s. And, in fact, this is what the historical record shows: if between 1750 and 1780, as a result of the initial shift, men publish

¹⁵ William B. Warner, *Licensing Entertainment. The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1685–1750*, Berkeley 1998, p. 44; April Alliston, 'Love in Excess', in *Il romanzo*, vol. 1, *La cultura del romanzo*, Torino 2001, p. 650; Gaye Tuchman and Nina Fortin, *Edging Women Out*, New Haven 1989, pp. 7–8.

FIGURE 12: *Authorship of new novels, Britain 1800–1829: gender breakdown (percentage)*



The 1810s show an even clearer pattern of female dominance, with women novelists out-producing their male counterparts in every year, and accounting for over 50 per cent of titles in six out of the eight years between 1810 and 1817. As these figures indicate, the publication of Jane Austen's novels was achieved not against the grain but during a period of female ascendancy. It is noticeable that Scott's earliest historical novels were launched when male authorship of fiction was at a lower than usual level.

Peter Garride, *The English Novel in the Romantic Era*

Source: Garride, Raven and Schoewinkel, eds, *The English Novel 1770–1829*.

indeed twice as many novels as women, in the late 1780s a second shift reverses the gender ratio, as one can see in Garside's breakdown for a slightly later period (figure 12), in which women novelists (among them Radcliffe, Edgeworth, Austen) remain the majority until a third shift occurs, around 1820, towards male writers (Scott; then Bulwer, Dickens, Thackeray), to be followed by a fourth shift back to women in mid-century (the Brontës, Gaskell, Braddon, Eliot), and then by a fifth one—the 'edging out'—in the 1870s. Similar data are beginning to emerge for France, Spain, the US, and it's fascinating to see how researchers are convinced that they are all describing something unique (*the* gender shift, *the* elevation of the novel, *the* gentrification, *the* invention of high and low, *the* feminization, *the* sentimental education, *the* invasion . . .), whereas in all likelihood they are all observing the same comet that keeps crossing and recrossing the sky: the same *literary cycle*, where gender and genre are probably in synchrony with each other—a generation of military novels, nautical tales, and historical novels *à la* Scott attracting male writers, one of domestic, provincial and sensation novels attracting women writers, and so on.

Now, let me be clear, saying that these studies describe the return of the same literary cycle is not an objection: quite the opposite, my thesis *depends* on their findings, and it even corroborates them by suggesting independent, parallel developments. But it's also true that if one reframes individual instances as moments of a cycle, then the nature of the questions changes: 'Events don't interest Lucien Febvre for what in them is unique', writes Pomian, but 'as units in a series, which reveal the conjunctural variations in . . . a conflict that remains constant throughout the period.'¹⁶

Variations in a conflict that remains constant: this is what emerges at the level of the cycle—and if the conflict remains constant, then the point is not who prevails in this or that skirmish, but exactly the opposite: no victory is ever definitive, neither men nor women writers 'occupy' the British novel once and for all, and the form keeps oscillating back and forth between the two groups. And if this sounds like nothing is happening, no, what is happening is *the oscillation*, which allows the novel to use a double pool of talents and of forms, thereby boosting its productivity, and giving it an edge over its many competitors. But this process

¹⁶ Pomian, 'L'histoire des structures', p. 117.

can only be glimpsed *at the level of the cycle*: individual episodes tend, if anything, to conceal it, and only the abstract pattern brings out the historical trend.⁷

XI

Do cycles and genres explain everything, in the history of the novel? Of course not. But they bring to light its hidden tempo, and suggest some questions on what we could call its internal shape. For most literary historians, I mean, there is a categorical difference between 'the novel' and the various 'novelistic (sub)genres': the novel is, so to speak, the substance of the form, and deserves a full general theory; subgenres are more like accidents, and their study, however interesting, remains local in character, without real theoretical consequences. The forty-four genres of figure 9, however, suggest a different historical picture, where the novel does not develop as a single entity—where is 'the' novel, there?—but by periodically generating a whole set of genres, and then another, and another . . . Both synchronically and diachronically, the novel is *the system of its genres*: the whole diagram, not one privileged part of it. Some genres are morphologically more significant, of course, or more popular, or both—and we must account for this: but not by pretending that they are the only ones that exist. And instead, all great theories of the novel have precisely reduced the novel to one basic form only (realism, the dialogic, romance, meta-novels . . .); and if the reduction has given them their elegance and power, it has also erased nine tenths of literary history. Too much.

⁷ A comparable oscillation is probably at work between High and Low forms, whose simultaneous existence is a well-known, if often ignored, fact of novelistic history: from the Hellenistic beginnings (divided between 'subliterary' and 'idealized' genres) through the middle ages, the seventeenth century (the *Bibliothèque Bleue*, and aristocratic novels), eighteenth (Warner's pair of 'entertainment' and 'elevation'), nineteenth (*feuilletons*, railway novels—and 'serious realism'), and twentieth century (pulp fiction—modernist experiments). Here, too, the strength of the novel is not to be found in *one* of the two positions, but in its rhythmical oscillation between them: the novel is not hegemonic because it makes it into High Culture (it does, yes, but it's so desperately professorial to be awed by this fact), but for the opposite reason: it is *never only* in High Culture, and it can keep playing on two tables, preserving its double nature, where vulgar and refined are almost inextricable.

I began this article by saying that quantitative data are useful because they are independent of interpretation; then, that they are interesting because they demand an interpretation; and now, most radically, we see them *challenge* existing interpretations, and ask for a theory, not so much of 'the' novel, but of a *whole family of novelistic forms*. A theory—of diversity. What this may mean, will be the topic of my third article.

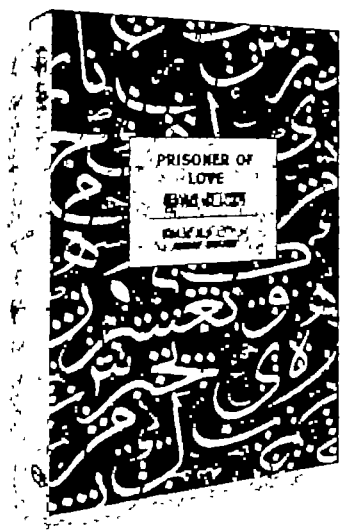
A NOTE ON THE TAXONOMY OF THE FORMS

The genres of figures 9 and 10 are listed below in the following way: current definition (in capitals); dates of beginning and end; and critical study from which I have drawn the chosen (and not always explicit) periodization. Since both figures are meant as a first panorama of a very large territory, soon to be improved by further work, a few words of caution are in order. First, except for the (rare) cases in which quantitative data or full bibliographies are available, the initial date refers to the genre's first recognizable example rather than to its genuine take-off, which occurs usually several years later; as our knowledge improves, therefore, it is likely that the chronological span of novelistic genres will turn out to be significantly shorter than the one given here. On the other hand, a few genres experience brief but intense revivals decades after their original peak, like the oriental tale in 1819–25, or the gothic after 1885, or the historical novel (more than once). How to account for these Draculaesque reawakenings is a fascinating topic, which however will have to wait for another occasion. Finally, the chart shows neither detective fiction nor science fiction; although both genres achieve their modern form around 1890 (Doyle and Wells), and undergo a major change in the 1920s, in step with the overall pattern, their peculiar long duration seems to require a different approach.

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Translated from the French by Barbara Bray

Introduction by Ahdaf Soueif

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CODEWORD MODERNITY

‘MODERNITY’, BY WHICH I mean the word, has had an exceptionally good run for its money, but is now long past its sell-by date (the term has been used to peddle so many meretricious panaceas of late that the commercial metaphor for once seems apt). According to Fredric Jameson, the ‘project’—another label subject to intolerable abuse—is over.¹ It may, on more dignified Habermasian assumptions, be incomplete; but its incompleteness is merely a token that whatever promise it once bore is now definitively buried. It has become a modern form of ‘antiquity’.²

Yet something strange—singular—is going on. It is a notable feature of the burial that, in public discourse, there have been many recent attempts to resurrect the corpse, above all in the Third Way’s ‘modernizing’ of political parties, social services, labour markets and, lately, just war.³ This is doubtless the sort of thing that Jameson has in mind when he speaks of a ‘reminting’ of the ‘modern’ that takes the form of ‘intellectual regressions’. Jameson cites the corresponding example of Schroeder’s Germany and Oskar Lafontaine’s lament:

The words ‘modernization’ and ‘modernity’ have been degraded to fashionable concepts under which you can think anything at all. If you try to figure out what the people called ‘modernizers’ today understand under the term ‘modernity’, you find that it is little else than economic and social adaptation to the supposed constraints of the global market.⁴

The term thus becomes code for closing down alternatives to capitalism, a massive irony in that many of the links between modernity, modernization and modernism are often held to be unintelligible without reference to the utopian and revolutionary moments of socialism and communism.⁵ Modernity’s epitaph might well be the long goodbye to the hopes invested in that particular constellation, overwhelmed by the

final triumph of the alignment of the Enlightenment project with the imperatives of a market society, the name for whose contemporary ubiquitousness is now the consumerist blankness of the postmodern. In the mouths of today's politicians, the 'modern' is but the spectral trace of the fake re-enchantment of a thoroughly disenchanted world.

This 'abuse'—Jameson's word—of terms presumes, if not correct, then at least plausible uses, from which it deviates. The task to hand therefore calls for numerous theoretical and historical discriminations; and is complicated by the fact that the abusive invocations are not merely random or opportunistic. There is something in the appropriations themselves that tells how the processes they ideologically represent and foreclose were, if not destined, then likely to end up precisely here. Jameson is a past master in showing how apparently bankrupt terms nevertheless disclose something of the reality they cover with the blandishments of

¹ Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present*, London 2002.

² Burial rites have become something of a standard move recently, in connexion with modernism, T. J. Clark states that 'modernism is our antiquity . . . a ruin, the logic of whose architecture we do not remotely grasp': *Farewell to an Idea*, London 1999, p. 2.

³ See, for example, Tony Blair's argument, in a statement to the House of Commons on 29 April 1999, to the effect that, 'regret' for collateral damage marking one of the differences between a morally sensitive civilization and a barbaric culture, the fact that Britain regretted the killing of innocent civilians became part of the justification for killing them.

⁴ Jameson agrees entirely with this description but also notes caustically: 'It is clear from Lafontaine's plaintive accents here not only that he lost this fundamental discursive struggle, but that he was never aware of its fundamental nature and stakes in the first place'.

⁵ The moment of modernism, both its birth and its brutally rapid death, before and during the Russian Revolution and in the early years of the Soviet Union, are a major concern of both Clark's *Farewell to an Idea* and Susan Buck-Morss's *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*. In Jameson's text, Clark's book gets but one footnoted reference, although one suspects its shadow hovers, as the site of a major point of disagreement (focused on the differences between the pairs modernity/modernism and postmodernity/postmodernism). Unaccountably Buck-Morss's book gets no mention at all. Might there be some connexion here with Malcolm Bull's suggestion that, in fact, modernism and socialism have little in common: where modernism was resistant to modernity, but 'was only intermittently and obliquely opposed to capitalism', socialism was opposed to capitalism but entirely at home in the project of modernity. See 'Between the Cultures of Capital', NLR 11, September–October 2001, p. 97.

the ideological caress—most influentially in his reflections on how the vulgar uses of the term ‘postmodernity’ reflect the vulgarization of the contemporary life world. The same holds for the degraded afterlife of the term ‘modernity’. From one point of view, it is empty, drained of all substantial meaning, but from another—symptomatic—point of view, it is full, directing the mind, when not drugged by the incantatory repetition of the empty signifier, to a bitter reckoning with where we are now. How then to sort the wheat from the chaff, especially when in certain cases the chaff itself turns out to be, in however thin or poisonous a guise, a form of wheat?

Meanings and uses

Jameson’s undertaking is thus first and foremost an inquiry into the fortunes of a word: ‘Let’s say, to cut it short, that this will be a formal analysis of the uses of the word ‘modernity’ that explicitly rejects any presupposition that there is a correct use of the word to be discovered, conceptualized and proposed’. This is reminiscent of Raymond Williams’s attempt—in *Keywords*, which also has an entry for ‘modern’—to track social and cultural histories by way of historicized semantics. It is an approach vulnerable to methodological critique—as, for example, in Quentin Skinner’s reservations about Williams’s method, in particular his claim that the book’s restriction of its brief to a field of historical meanings elided the crucial distinction between ‘meaning’ and ‘reference’.⁶ This is, if in a somewhat different fashion, also a problem for Jameson. If meanings, especially ideologically congealed ones, obscure reality, we nevertheless have to deploy them as a bridgehead to provide some relation of reference to actual states of affairs—the latter identified, broadly, with capitalism: ‘the only satisfactory semantic meaning of modernity lies in its association with capitalism’. Jameson compares this to looking through a ‘pane of glass’; but whereas the metaphor normally signifies a principle of uncomplicated transparency (as in Sartre and Orwell), here it is the site of a frustration:

What is constitutively frustrating about such an analysis is that, like the pane of glass at which you try to gaze even as you are looking through it, you must simultaneously affirm the existence of the object while denying the relevance of the term that designates that existence.

⁶ Quentin Skinner, ‘Language and Social Change’, in James Tully, ed., *Meaning and Context*, Cambridge 1988, pp. 119–32.

The relevant action, therefore, is neither seeing transparently nor looking through a glass darkly, but one of simultaneous viewing, in which (analogous perhaps to Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit conundrum) you cannot take in both objects at once. The glass gets in the way even as it appears to permit a through-view. We are thus required to grasp what's out-there at once with, through and yet despite the word; as both aid and impediment, the 'notions that cluster around the word "modern" are as unavoidable as they are unacceptable'.

This take on semantics and what it is alleged to deliver doubtless requires further analytical honing, but it sets the stage for the difficulty of addressing the central question: what, against the multiple misuses and abuses of the term, is or was modernity? The difficulty arises because, posed thus, this proves to be a false trail. Jameson's is not an 'is' question, in the sense of the copula articulating an essence that can be subsumed under a single 'concept'—presumably, another intended sense of the term 'singular' in his title: 'modernity', whatever it might be taken to be, will be cast in the plural form. Part One of the book consists in the presentation of 'The Four Maxims of Modernity', the second of which is that: 'Modernity is not a concept but rather a narrative category'. Governed by various, more or less self-conscious tropes, discourses and ideologies, modernity is the stories we tell ourselves and others about it.

In this, Jameson again shares something with Raymond Williams who, in *The Politics of Modernism*, rehearsed the 'ratified' story of modernism—a tale retrospectively constructed via the mechanisms of the 'selective tradition', saturated with ideology and thus naturalizing itself as the only story in town. But where Williams identifies but one dominant narrative, subject to correction by a more embracing account that includes what the ratified version leaves out, Jameson highlights many, jostling against one another and with no ready means of adjudication to hand. This way with narrativization raises the problem of relativism (how to choose between competing stories), although Jameson has no difficulty in affirming some narratives as better than others; to this end his master-trope—but is it simply a trope?—is the 'dialectic'. Jameson's own story is buttressed by a very powerful theoretical armature—if not guided by a Concept, then underpinned by concepts galore. It remains nevertheless a story, if only in the minimalist sense of framing the principal question as a temporal one: displacing

it from abstract definition to historical location, from 'is' to 'when'; thus again echoing Williams's essay, 'When was Modernism?'.

Permanently new?

'When', however, gets a guarded response, in the form of the double negative that structures Maxim Number One: 'We cannot not periodize'. Why the double negative, and how does this oddly phrased imperative apply to the thing called 'modernity'? Perhaps one reason for the odd phrasing is that there is a venerable tradition which claims, if only implicitly, that the imperative does not apply. Baudelaire identified the modern with the Now and, if not quite co-extensively then relatedly, with the New. This is an extension of Stendhal's account of the romantic, according to which all that is Now is by definition New: Racine, for the eighteenth and nineteenth century the archetype of the neoclassical old, was, in the conditions of seventeenth-century France, the New; a thought more generally activated in the late seventeenth-century *querelle des anciens et des modernes*.

This account of historical conditionality does not, of course, quite work: much that is produced in the here and now (for us, the there and then of history) is not new but a recycling of the old, a conservative gesture of preservation. But on the whole the formula has functioned self-servingly well, especially in certain versions of avant-gardist ideology. Modernity is simply what leaves or struggles to leave the past behind. Rimbaud's *Il faut être absolument moderne*—the title for Jameson's Conclusion—is not just a description of a state of affairs, but a prescriptive rallying call to where we ought to be, the overdetermining adverb expressive of the desire to wipe out the past completely; as will be Nietzsche's admonition to 'forget' the past in the name of an existential project of heroic-aristocratic self-refashioning.

This grand dream of what it is to be imperiously 'modern' shatters on the rocks of, among other things, Derrida's reflections on late-coming, also cited by Jameson. Derrida's 'always too late to talk about time' means that the idea of consigning a past from the vantage point of a pure present, an experience of irreducible nowness, is an illusion. What we call 'the present' is a dynamic cluster of temporal traces, of the past it has been and the future it is in process of becoming. Just as I can say 'here' without knowing where I am, I can say 'now' without knowing

what time it is; not because I do not have a clock to hand, but because the moment of the act distinguishing 'now' and 'then' is undone as the act is accomplished. Translated from the individual to the collective, the existential to the historical, today's modernity is, on the longer-haul view, tomorrow's antiquity.

This way a kind of madness lies: everything is what it is not, confounding both the Aristotelian logic of identity and difference and the Aristotelian aesthetic of beginning, middle and end. If it offers a tonically sceptical take on our overconfident way with temporality and historicity—the force of the first 'not' in Jameson's maxim, whose argument is supplied for us in the structuralist critique of historicism—it can also leave us stranded in the epistemological quicksands. Whence the force of the second 'not', which I take to be more than just the assertion of a pragmatic necessity in the teeth of radical scepticism. It is also a recognition that the equation of 'modern' with the Now and the New finally generates what it ostensibly represses: a form of historical framing, without which we capitulate to yet another regression—for succession, as just one goddamned thing after another, would be a 'reversion to the chronicle as a mode of storing and registering information'. Indeed, as Jameson points out, the equation is not itself modern, in the historical sense of what is specific to the culture of the last 150 years or so. It can be traced back to what we call late Antiquity: in the writings of Cassiodorus, the Latin *modernus* signified not just the past-effacing new, but also its substantive contrary *antiquas*. Periodization was thus written into the scenario from the word go.⁷

Ends and beginnings

What, then, if we continue to insist on a periodization, of both 'modernity' and its problematical cousin, 'modernism'? How might we circumscribe the historical parameters of each, along with their points of mutual contact? And how, in so doing, might we avoid the homogenizing implications of the least attractive aspect of Hegel's legacy of *Zeitgeist* history—what Jameson calls 'the usual formula'? Where, for example, to begin and end? Is modernity best understood as the 'project' described

⁷ Williams traces the association of the term 'modern' with periodization in English usage, from the sixteenth century onwards. *Keywords* (2nd edition), London 1983, p. 208. On the early usage of *modernus*, and the problems of thinking historically, see also Antoine Compagnon, *Les cinq paradoxes de la modernité*, Paris 1990.

by Habermas, issuing from the secular energies of the Enlightenment; or, as in the French usages described by Antoine Compagnon's *Les cinq paradoxes de la modernité*, centred on the post-Enlightenment discourses of 'nihilism'? Is there a 'good' and a 'bad' modernity, along the lines sketched by Marshall Berman in *All That is Solid Melts into Air*: the adventurous makings of the later eighteenth and the nineteenth century, as against the hollow, anaemic forms of the postwar period? Is 'modernism' most appropriately dated from somewhere in the late nineteenth century through to the onset of the Cold War, after which we enter, however variously defined and evaluated, the phase of 'postmodernity'? Or should it be taken further back, as Williams suggested, into the moment of 'realism', as well as outwards, to everything marginalized by the marketed image of the 'avant-garde'? Where you begin and end depends on the kind of story you want to tell; again, the ghost of relativism. In the case of beginnings, Jameson lists fourteen possible entries for a narrative incipit, adding mischievously that 'many more are lurking in the wings'; and that, whatever we do with them, 'the "correct" theory of modernity is not to be obtained by putting them all together in some hierarchical synthesis'.

What Jameson proposes instead is a kind of critical narratology with which to classify and analyse the organizing categories of the periodizing narratives of modernity. The principal forms and figures here include: continuity; discontinuity; break; and transition. Fleshing this schematic grid is a set of finer distinctions, although sometimes so fussily fine as to suggest that Polonius has wandered into the script. Thus we have not only the more or less standard pre, early, classical, high, late and post, but also unmodern, non-modern, anti-modern; along with the not immediately compelling 'less' and 'more' modern. Keeping track of all this places large demands on the synapses, especially when it takes us into such paradoxical descriptions as the unmodern as 'modernist' and the anti-modern 'remain[ing] modern in its very denial and resistance'. But if the text at times becomes rebarbatively labyrinthine, the main lines of the argument, while forbiddingly dense, are relatively clear. The prime figure is, of course, the break. Nearly all the main accounts, theoretical and polemical, of both modernity and modernism turn on the pivotal notion of a rupture, often of allegedly world-historical dimensions. This implicates Jameson's own story, above all his insistence that 'modernity', as a historiographic category, refers to something now definitively of the past—as posited by the 'postmodern break' of

his Fourth Maxim: 'No "theory" of modernity makes sense today unless it comes to terms with the hypothesis of a postmodern break with the modern'. (I will come to the Third Maxim at a later juncture.)

Break theory

The first break is, however, notoriously difficult to situate historically. Hegel places it at the end of Antiquity. Heidegger offers three breaks, as 'moments of the emergence of modernity': the shift from 'the Greek experience of Being' to 'Roman conceptual reification'; the subject-object split of seventeenth-century Cartesianism, initiating the regime of the World Picture; and the later apocalyptic account of the impact of technology. Foucault, in many ways Heidegger's successor in break-theory, also proposes a trio: the 'classical' (again represented by the seventeenth-century scientific revolution); the 'historicist-vitalist' moment of the nineteenth century; and finally, that shadowy horizon of a projected future that heralds the death of Man. The sheer number of candidates speaks of an obsession—one that we might properly call 'modernist'—but is also symptomatic of a problem which exceeds that of a merely empirical historiography. The break is a logical black hole: while it presupposes what it denies (the lineaments of a narrative periodization), it also denies what it presupposes, in that it itself eludes narrative or causal explanation. Foucault's epistemic breaks, for example, are famously uncaused; they simply happen—although Jameson works overtime to persuade us that Foucault's thought remains, in the end, 'profoundly dialectical'. But there is no intelligible historical narrative without a model of causality, however much the latter needs to be weaned from linear historicist constructions. In this respect, the epistemology of the break is held within the ideology of modernity itself, in its repeated association with the New, its casting as *pure* break—mythically attractive in spinning the various making-it-new scenarios of modernism but, as with all alleged events of spectacular self-origination, also begging the question of its own explanation.

For breaks are never just a snapping of the historical thread. They can be dramatic, or relatively prolonged, or both, as with the French Revolution, to the extent of constituting mini-periods in their own right; whose logic is governed by the principle of the transition which mediates between a continuist and discontinuist model of history. The transition designates the process—analysed by Jameson, again, via Heidegger and Foucault,

with the addition of Althusser and structuralist accounts of changes in the mode of production—whereby residual elements of previous systems of thought and practice are taken up within a new one, but with quite different functions. Transitions are thus zones of action characterized by overlaps, delays, *fuites en avant*, in which the various categories of pre, early, less, more and late ‘modern’ all participate. In particular, the notion of the transition carries major implications for how we think the connexions between modernity, modernization and modernism. The normal way of construing these links is to ‘posit modernity as the new historical situation, modernization as the process whereby we get there, and modernism as a reaction to that situation and that process alike’. But this may simply be defeated by the historical facts, especially when we take into account the highly varied national pathways both to and through the project of modernity, and the vastly differential and heterogeneous temporalities of modernization. Nor should modernity be identified with a ‘completed’ form (or as far as we have got with it) of industrial and technological modernization, which is, rather, a feature of postmodernity. Instead, modernity is tied to a situation of ‘incomplete’ modernization. It is a structure of hope, fear and fantasy invested in an emergent formation and a possible future.

Modernism's entrance

This is also the case with the decisive moment of modernism, grasped as a set of aesthetic doctrines and artistic practices; that is to say, ‘classical’ or ‘high’ modernism—or what, trapped in the relativist straitjacket from which he is otherwise so desperate to escape, Jameson finds ‘embarrassing’ to call ‘real’ or ‘genuine’ modernism, and thus does so ‘not without some hesitation’. Classical modernism belongs in a ‘transitional era’ poised between ‘two distinct worlds’, those of the traditional, agricultural and peasant order, and the new machine-based industrialism, where the ‘new technological machinery brings with it its own aesthetic shock, in the way it erupts without warning into the older pastoral and feudal landscape’. Russia, Italy, and to some extent pre-First World War France provide the key examples. This is the social-historical context of the Shock of the New at its most authentically shocking, whether in a mode of euphoric exhilaration or of profound cultural despair. In this regard, Jameson’s narrative echoes Perry Anderson’s periodization of modernism as dating, roughly, from the late nineteenth century through to the eve of the Second World War; and issuing from a triangulated field

of force that comprises a society, whose 'ruling order remained to a significant extent agrarian or aristocratic'; a technology 'whose impact was still fresh or incipient'; and 'an open political horizon in which revolutionary upheavals of one kind or another against the prevailing order were widely expected or feared'. None of the three coordinates was 'at peace with the market as the organizing principle of a modern culture'.⁸

Anderson's periodizing construct is one robustly built to last, although it has recently been buffeted by T. J. Clark, whose *longue durée* perspective, commanded by a increasingly bleak neo-Weberian story of disenchantment, forms a powerful counter-narrative, marred only by its occasional air of a lament delivered from the slopes of Mount Sinai. It is not clear that Jameson has much that is distinctive to add to Anderson's account. He is also close to Anderson in reminding us that, if this is modernism as the 'genuine' article, it did not typically name itself as such but was characterized rather by a plurality of terms: constructivism, futurism, cubism, surrealism and so forth. The homogenizing label 'modernism' was a later application, retrospectively conferred, partly with a view to imposing a seamlessly linear temporality on an allegedly unified field.

This subsequent development brings us forward to the phase that Jameson terms 'late modernism', in which the congealing force of ideology finally takes hold. Late modernism is an essentially us affair⁹ and is 'a product of the Cold War, but in all kinds of complicated ways'. It is 'late' not just in the temporal sense, post-Second World War, but also as a belated reprise—at once modifying and traducing—of some of the canonical features of earlier modernist thinking. On one hand, it keeps faith with the anti-modernity strain of high modernism, a last ditch stand against the depredations of capital as a market society hovers over its descent into the trammels of a fully commercialized postmodernity. On the other, it is distinguished from the 'heroic' moment of its predecessor in its complicity with 'the end of a whole era of social transformations and indeed of Utopian desires and anticipations'. It embodies a retreat from political alternatives to the rule of capital, through its insistence on (a version of) the 'autonomy' of art. Its high priest was Clement

⁸ Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity*, London 1998, p. 81

⁹ This might have been news to someone like the Danish painter Asger Jorn and the Cobra movement, but that involves another story altogether, engaging quite different meanings for both the terms 'modernism' and 'late': Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, p. 389–91.

Greenberg, to whom Jameson accords some extended, if over-inflating, attention.¹⁰ Greenberg's relentless touting of the self-referring flatness and materiality of the painterly surface sought to sever art from representational practices, including the anguished engagement of an earlier modernism with the limits of representation—an aspect of modernism in, for example, cubist painting, that was systematically eclipsed in the texts and discourses surrounding the exhibitions at MoMA during Greenberg's long intellectual reign.¹¹

Subjectivity and crisis

We can think of this moment as a variant of 'ideological' modernism for several reasons, but most centrally by virtue of a line, deceptively continuous, running back to the beginnings—in so far as these are at all locatable—of the whole story. The philosophical *fons et origo* of modernity, in this narrative, is the cognitive sovereignty won by the Cartesian *cogito*—'the Samuel Smiles of cognitive enterprise', as Ernest Gellner put it.¹² Wrested from the shackles of medieval theology, this mid-seventeenth-century conquest inaugurated the long history of the subject-object split, the celebration of the virtues of privacy, individuality and introspection—and the corresponding negative mantras, from romanticism onwards, of loss, alienation and reification, the separation of spheres of social life (subsequently refined by Luhman in the notion

¹⁰ Greenberg was certainly a man of great intelligence and indomitable intellectual will; but a 'genius as a critic', as Jameson puts it, is arguably a misuse of terms.

¹¹ Quoting the catalogue entry on MoMA's cubist Picassos by the chief curator, William Rubin—which describes the paintings' representational constituents as 'largely abstracted from their former descriptive functions. Thus disengaged, they are reordered to the expressive purposes of the pictorial configurations as autonomous entities'—Clark comments biting on "pictorial configurations" having (in and of themselves, it seems to be claimed) "expressive purposes". While registering 'the shock and excitement' of a first encounter with his work, for Clark, 'even at the time, it was chilling to see Greenberg's views become an orthodoxy': *Farewell to an Idea*, pp. 175–6. As Compagnon notes, Greenberg's defence of the values of surface and flatness rests on a schematic historicist narrative, at once continuist and teleological, whereby Cézanne 'prepares' cubism, and cubism 'anticipates' abstract expressionism. The narrative entails a travesty of the facts, in the cases of Cézanne, Picasso and Braque literally editing out of the picture what, so to speak, flatly contradicts the hypothesis of flatness: *Les cinq paradoxes de la modernité*, pp. 65–78.

¹² Gellner, *Reason and Culture*, Oxford 1992, p. 3. Gellner of course sees self-made Cognitive Man as an immense cultural gain.

of 'differentiation'), the hyper-reflexivities of self-consciousness, and the autonomy of the aesthetic.

This is where Jameson's effort to look both at and through his pane of glass is at its most taxingly strenuous. The section on Descartes is one of the more opaque in the book, but is essentially geared to contesting the story of both modernity and modernism that places the primacy of the subject centre-stage. This yields the decisive formulation of his Third Maxim: 'The narrative of modernity cannot be organized around categories of subjectivity (*consciousness and subjectivity are unrepresentable*)'. Subjectivity, as the ground of thinking, cannot thereby be an object of representation for thought. Jameson suggestively rewrites Descartes's *ergo* as 'that is to say', rather than as 'therefore', thus releasing *cogito, ergo sum* from the representational form of a syllogism.

This does not mean that there is no relation between subjectivity and representation in modernist art and literature. On the contrary, much artistic energy went into the search for meaning among the ruins of the given meanings. There is, for example, what Jameson terms a form of post-romantic 'nominalism', in which a traditional and precisely coded lexicon for the naming of feelings and emotions ('the unsatisfactory inherited linguistic schema of subjectivity') breaks down, to be replaced with 'some newer representational substitute'. This is often—wrongly—described as the 'progressive uncovering of new realms of subjectivity'. It reflects rather 'a perpetual process of unnamings and refiguration which has no foreseeable stopping point (until, with the end of the modern itself, it reaches exhaustion)'. Modernist subjectivity has, therefore, nothing to do with the ideological cliché of the 'inward turn'. It is rather about a crisis of subjectivity and a related crisis of representation. It is not so much that the self is there to be 'explored' as that it is overwhelmed by 'an apocalyptic dissatisfaction with subjectivity itself'. The drive is to 'mutation' and 'transfiguration' of the system of subjectivity, linked to the telos of 'a Utopian and revolutionary transmutation of the world of actuality itself'. It is what came to be called 'depersonalization', the tones of which are first heard in the fiction of Flaubert and the poetry of Mallarmé and Rilke.

From purity to nothingness

The myths of subjectivity helped both to found and reinforce two other notions which, *mutatis mutandis*, take us forward to the ideological scene

of late modernism: reflexivity and autonomy. The idea of the autonomous and self-referring nature of the work of art was not, of course, a North American invention of the Cold War period; it arose more or less co-extensively with the elaboration of the discipline of aesthetics from the later eighteenth century onwards; its philosophical *locus classicus* being Kant's *Third Critique*. But it is here that the alleged line of continuity proves truly deceptive, and a prime instance of the way the 'same' element can acquire different 'functional' values in different systems of thought. Jameson is thus categorical that any claiming of the lineage of Kant for late-modernist ideology is itself a historical category-mistake. Kantian aesthetics 'freed art from feudal decoration and positioned a new bourgeois art to carry Utopian and, later, modernist values'. It is hence quite wrong 'to reappropriate the Kantian system for an anti-political and purely aestheticist late modernist revival'. These are both wise and heartening words, at a time when Kant is being disreputably pressed into the service of all kinds of non-Kantian commitments. For Kant and his successors—most notably, Schiller and Hegel—culture was a point of mediation between art and society. Late-modernist ideology was, and to some extent remains, precisely the rupture of that mediation. It operated a highly charged form of modern 'separation', between art and culture, the ultimate purpose of which was to introduce a scission into the very concept of the aesthetic itself, securing it for the realm of high art, the 'aesthetic field radically cleansed and purified of culture'—which comes, increasingly, to stand for 'mass culture'. Its avatars will be the notions of 'pure' painting and poetry, reflected, for instance, in Blanchot's view of literature as pure writing, autonomous and disinterested. No longer in the Kantian sense of the terms but rather as motiveless, absolute negativity: Blanchot's notorious '*le rien pur et simple*'.

Late-modernist ideology thus envisaged a practice of art from which 'content' (Greenberg's term) was to be excised. The relevant form of content was largely narrative in kind and excising it was one way of making history disappear. Narrative, however, has a way of springing back, reminiscent of the return of the repressed; a psychoanalytical notion much favoured by Jameson. In the sphere of literary theory, we witness its return in the advent of the various structuralist narratologies, along with the rediscovery of Bakhtin and certain interpretations of Freud. More pertinently, we also encounter it in many of the writers associated with the period of late modernism—Beckett, along with Nabokov, is cited as an exemplary instance. Ostensibly, late-modernist

writing exemplifies the new, self-enclosed and content-banishing style of reflexivity, in contradistinction to the more open and questioning sort of classical modernism; it 'involves a constant and self-conscious return to art about art, and art about the creation of art'. Beckett's minimalism, especially in the late texts, is posited as a formalism: textual and scenic repetition as a kind of abstract dance, aspiring to the visual conditions of painting and the rhythmic properties of music. But in the residual trace of narrative representation at its core—for Jameson, the 'anecdote'—such work also gives the lie to late-modernist ideology:

an anecdotal core or given always marks the inassimilable empirical content which was to have been the pretext for sheer form . . . unhappy marriage, intolerable youthful memories, a banal family structure, with irreducible names and characters, the punctual biographical events that stand out unredeemably from the failure of a drab and sorry life.

This characterization of Beckett warrants some comment that might bear more generally on the thrust of Jameson's literary and cultural thinking. For to see Beckett's work as a refuge for late-modernist ideological formalism, then undercut by a minuscule and impoverished return of the narrative repressed, might well be the point at which some choose to check out of the argument. Beckett famously described his work as an art of 'subtraction', but subtraction of what from what remains an immensely controversial question, much larger in its potential remit than Jameson's scheme allows for. There is also a strangely elliptical transition from the concluding remarks on Beckett to the claim that one of the consequences of late-modernist ideology was the 'production of a far more accessible literature of what can then be called a middle-brow type'. The literature in question is neither specified nor attributed, and the ellipsis could be taken to imply that Beckett is placed in this company. If this is what Jameson means it borders on the fatuous and suggests that the insistence on the late modern as a period category has produced a wilful 'subtraction' of a very different kind.

But perhaps a different point is being made here, concerned less with Beckett than with 'Beckett', that is, the image forged in the public reception of his work, above all *Waiting for Godot*. Here indeed—along with the literally circulated image of Nabokov, on the cover of *Time* magazine—was a middlebrow version of a kind of pop-cultural event. This dissemination was, in many ways, the quintessence of

late-modernist ideology served up for public consumption and attracts the acerbic comment that:

It does not seem unduly restrictive, in an age of mass education, to suggest that the public of such a middlebrow late-modernist literature and culture can be identified as the class fraction of college students (and their academic trainers), whose bookshelves, after graduation into 'real life', preserve the souvenirs of this historically distinctive consumption which the surviving high modernist aesthetes and intellectuals have baptized as the canon, or Literature as such.

Excavating the future

This is where Jameson's story more or less leaves us. What, then, does it finally deliver? Basically, the assertion that modernity and the discourses about it—or perhaps: modernity as the discourses about it—are essentially ways of talking (or refusing to talk) about capitalism. The equation of modernity and capitalism is trenchant, though not unqualified:

if I recommend the experimental procedure of substituting capitalism for modernity in all the contexts in which the latter appears, this is a therapeutic rather than a dogmatic recommendation, designed to exclude old problems (and to produce new and more interesting ones).

This is also true of the principal discourses of modernism, whatever the particular stance adopted by any given doctrine, manifesto or artwork. If, in order to understand our own history, they are 'unavoidable', they are also, now, 'unacceptable'. There is an imperative need to clear the decks, all the more so given the extent to which the discursive space has been re-colonized by a brazenly opportunist politics. To be 'modern' today is simply to be smart, in all senses—including, of course, the ability to follow where the smart money goes. The best, then, might be just to forget it, were it not that 'forgetting' is itself a modernist trope, and why an 'ontology of the present', Jameson's immensely appealing subtitle, has to deal with *both* the unacceptable and the unavoidable. On the other hand, Jameson's exit is splendidly abrasive: 'What we really need is a wholesale displacement of the thematics of modernity by the desire called Utopia', a gesture presumably meant as at once restorative—reclaiming what has been lost from the earlier phases of modernism—and oriented towards an as yet undefined future. Whence

the book's somewhat teasing final sentence: 'Ontologies of the present demand archaeologies of the future, not forecasts of the past.'

But if this is where the story ends, where does it leave us with the category of Story itself? I have already mentioned the dilemma of relativism that shadows Jameson's narratology, countered by the drive to move beyond trope and ideology in the direction of, precisely, an ontology as distinct from a discourse. The banner under which this endeavour flies is, of course, the Dialectic. The latter is what enables us to grasp how things hang together, without which we are permanently at risk of falling into those modernist traps—separation, specialization, autonomy—which are, at once, ideological constructs and real social-cultural effects:

the dialectic comes into being as an attempt to hold these contradictory features of structural analogy and the radical internal differences in dynamic and in historical causality together within the framework of a single thought or language.

But the dialectic does not come cheap. It is not a pre-given totalizing frame, effectively rigging the results in advance. It is a master-figure without the privilege of mastery, and appears as something of a modernist character in its own right, flitting in and out of the folds of Jameson's text, akin to Mallarmé's Absolute, floating in a zone of virtuality that is neither presence nor absence. The dialectic presupposes the general and the universal as a way of making sense of particulars; but access to the general and the universal can be had only by a passage through particulars. It is less a state than a process of thought.

This is eloquently said; but in this book, at least, the process in question is more gestured at, as a heuristically necessary presupposition, than actually instantiated. We perhaps get some sense of what the dialectic looks like in Jameson's handling of his theoretical sources. Much of the book takes the form of a suite of theoretical vignettes, deep-structural snapshots (rounding up the usual suspects: Heidegger, Adorno, Benjamin, Foucault, Barthes, Althusser, Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard, de Man, Blanchot, Luhman, and—if I may ingenuously say—so on), all shaken in a cocktail of some higher-order synthesis. The procession of distilled theoretical profiles has long been a quintessential Jamesonian signature, but it might be just as plausible to see the method rather as an academic variant of a distinctively modernist idiom—

namely, the collage—than as an instance of the dialectic at work. In any case, this is a way of doing meta-theory on theories, as distinct from work on real historical processes and actual artistic practices. One striking feature of this volume—in part, about modernism—is that there are very many theories in it, but correspondingly little on artistic and literary practices. I imagine this is due in large measure to the slightly cryptic description of the book, on the inside cover, as ‘the theoretical section of the antepenultimate volume of *The Poetics of Social Forms*’. There is an exciting (utopian) promise here; although we might also want to bear in mind what Jameson himself says, in connexion with the holistic way with ‘periodization’:

this operation is intolerable and unacceptable in its very nature, for it attempts to take a point of view on individual events which is well beyond the observational capacities of any individual, and to unify, both horizontally and vertically, hosts of realities whose interrelationships must remain inaccessible and unverifiable, to say the least.

Saying the least here is saying a lot. It will be interesting to find out what, in these terms, the dialectic in action will give us.

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THE MYTH OF ANGLOPHONE SUCCESSION

From British Primacy to American Hegemony

IN RECENT YEARS it has become commonplace to identify the exercise of hegemony, and the rule of a particular hegemonic power, as systemic components of a geopolitical order which began in 1648, if not many centuries before. Scholars from traditions as different in ideological outlook as the World-Systems and Hegemonic Stability Theory schools have applied the term to powers as varied as the Sung dynasty, the United Provinces, the Italian city-states—Venice, Florence, Genoa, Milan—Great Britain and the United States. Crucially, they have sought to portray the *Pax Britannica* as a precedent, and antecedent, for the current global dominance of the United States. Thus, according to one widely accepted paradigm, after a destructive interregnum of interstate violence and neo-mercantilism that lasted from 1914 until 1941, the US succeeded to the benign hegemonic role that Britain had played in the world order from the French Revolution down to the Great War.¹

While parallels and analogies in the history of great-power politics are not hard to find, the argument here is that since Rome, no state (Britain included) has attained a scale of domination through force and consent—Gramsci's classic characterization of the hegemon—comparable to that exercised by governments of the United States since 1941. An appraisal of the singular external contexts in which the two powers arose, their distinct domestic economies, the patterns of their inter-state relations, their differing deployment of naval and military force and the operation

and status of their financial systems within the international economy, suggests rather that the clear and significant contrasts between the roles played by Britain, from 1793 to 1914, and the United States, from 1941 to the present day, overwhelm superficial similarities. If we are to speak of the hegemony of the latter, then 'primacy' might be a better description of the first. Conceptual ellision of the distinct world roles of these two states serves only to confect a theory devoid of history.

The rise of Britain

As rulers of a small, not particularly advanced economy, located on an offshore island, Tudor and Stuart regimes had always taken full cognizance of their realm's place in a wider, largely European and Atlantic economy, as well as its vulnerability to attack and invasion from the sea. Before the Glorious Revolution they lacked the fiscal resources to play anything but a peripheral role in geopolitics on the mainland and relied on the sea, together with a modest allocation of national resources to a partially privatized Royal Navy, to defend their kingdom against external aggression. England's detached position in the hierarchy of contending European states and economies began to change after the Civil War when its rulers, Republican and Royal alike, reconstructed a fiscal system capable of providing the state with the taxes and loans required to invest in naval power, hire mercenaries, subsidize military allies on the Continent and play an altogether more active and aggressive role in power politics.¹ Between 1651 and 1802, the British state fought ten wars against major European rivals (the Netherlands, Spain and above all France) to maintain the security of the realm, preserve its highly inegalitarian system of property rights, jack up the nation's share of the gains from trade and the profits from servicing an expanding global economy; and safeguard the kingdom's growing portfolio of assets—concessions, territories, natural resources and colonies in the Americas, Africa and Asia.²

¹ Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead*, New York 1990; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, London 1988. I am very grateful to Niall Ferguson for giving me the opportunity to disagree with his unpublished paper, 'British Imperialism Revisited: the Costs and Benefits of Anglo-globalization', Stern School of Business, New York 2003.

² Richard Bonney, ed., *Economic Systems and State Finance*, Oxford 1995.

³ Patrick O'Brien, 'Political Preconditions for the Industrial Revolution', in O'Brien and Roland Quinault, eds, *The Industrial Revolution and British Society*, Cambridge 1993.

By 1815, the recently united kingdom could boast the largest navy in the world and the most extensive occidental empire since Rome; extraordinary shares of the profits derived from overseas commerce; and a domestic economy that stood halfway through the first industrial revolution. Even then, in global terms, the economy remained small; but its endowments of fertile land, cheap energy and a skilled workforce, together with its navy, had enabled the offshore island to reallocate more of its national resources to manufacturing industry than its main European rivals and to convert inputs into outputs somewhat more efficiently.⁴

The Continental powers' problems in contending with the rise of Britain, between 1651 and 1815, emanated in part from inferior natural endowments, especially of coal deposits, and from marginally weaker economies. Retardation persisted and widened because their fiscal and financial systems could not provide the mainland states of *ancien régime* Europe with the taxes and loans required to match British expenditures on naval and military power. Between 1688 and 1815, as real expenditures on its army and navy multiplied by a factor of 15, while domestic product increased just three times, the Hanoverian state appropriated and borrowed a rising share of national resources, which it used overwhelmingly to secure strategic, political and related economic gains. Neither France, Spain, the Netherlands nor any of Britain's competitors or clients could match London's ever-expanding capacity to tax, borrow and spend on ships, arms and troops. Their fiscal constitutions and inefficient institutions for the assessment and collection of taxes constrained the power of continental central governments (monarchical and oligarchical alike) to raise revenues. Furthermore, after three centuries of active engagement in state formation, reformation, wars of religion and imperial ventures overseas, their fiscal systems had become almost impossible to reform. Resistance to their rulers' ever-increasing demands for revenues solidified; the capacities of most European states to tax and borrow ran into diminishing returns. The Hanoverian regime and its domestic economy thus reaped the benefits of a latecomer to power politics, rivalry for colonies and overseas trade.⁵

⁴ François Crouzet, *A History of the European Economy 1000–2000*, Charlottesville, VA 2001.

⁵ Patrick O'Brien, 'Fiscal Exceptionalism. Great Britain and its European Rivals' in Donald Winch and Patrick O'Brien, eds, *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience, 1688–1914*, Oxford 2002.

After nearly four centuries of mercantilism (1415–1815), the entire system of international relations was rent apart by twenty-two years of disruptive warfare associated with the French Revolution and the attempt by France to dominate Continental Europe. When Napoleon's ambition was finally thwarted the British state, its fiscal and financial system, royal navy and domestic economy, emerged from the most destructive of European conflicts in much better shape than the devastated economies, dilapidated fiscal bases and defeated armed forces of its rivals. Plenipotentiaries who gathered at the Congress of Vienna to re-establish some kind of stable international order recognized that the one clear outcome of the French Revolution had been to promote British trade, commerce, finance, industry and naval power to unmistakable positions of primacy. Nevertheless—and despite the fact that Britain had cobbled together four coalitions, subsidized the armies of Austria, Prussia, Russia and several minor powers, committed troops to campaigns in Iberia and Flanders, provided the bulk of the naval power to defeat France and its allies at sea—no European state looked to Britain to play the role of global hegemon. On the contrary: they looked to the recovery of their economies, the reconstruction of their fiscal and financial systems, the rebuilding of their armed forces—and even the reconstruction of monarchical government in France—to bring back a balance of power that might preserve the status quo and check any latent British ambitions to exploit their economic, naval and military weaknesses.⁶ Nor did Britain's rulers themselves ever contemplate or presume to occupy the place retrospectively assigned to them by social science whose theories 'predict' that the systemic properties of global international relations would prompt them and their rivals to do just that at the Congress of Vienna.⁷

American expansionism

By contrast, during the century which preceded its emergence on to the world stage, the United States was virtually untroubled by warfare with peer powers. Before 1917, and perhaps as late as 1941, the geopolitical context in which governments in Washington operated was largely confined to the Americas, north and south. In 1823, prompted by Canning, President Monroe explicitly reserved the entire western hemisphere as

⁶ Kalevi Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and the International Order 1648–1989*, Cambridge 1991.

⁷ Charles Webster, *The Congress of Vienna 1814–15*, New York 1963.

a sphere of influence for the new Republic.⁸ Tacitly protected by the Royal Navy from all further attempts at colonization by an Iberian, Dutch, French or other European power seeking territory and wealth in the New World, us diplomatic confrontations thereafter were overwhelmingly with its wary and rejected mother country. Over Texas, Oregon, California, Venezuela, Panama, even Canada as well as the far more serious issue of the Confederacy, London invariably appeased Washington.⁹

After the War of 1812–14, Britain's command of the seas and enforcement of Monroe's doctrine meant that other European powers had no option but to allow Federal governments in Washington to hold the Union together, while formulating constitutional rules and enforcing legal codes for the most effective exploitation of a sparsely populated continent, rich in natural resources and with enormous potential for economic growth. Even when, after the closing of the internal frontier, the American navy moved (as European navies had done for centuries past) to secure the new nation's 'home waters' by establishing bases—Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guam, Hawaii, the Philippines—out in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, only Mexico, Spain and, in a farcical fashion, Napoleon III challenged its manifest destiny and precocious ambition to secure both continental and oceanic power.¹⁰

Meanwhile American business, operating within an evolving framework of law and institutions highly conducive to private enterprise, realized quickly and effectively the potential inherent in the continent's massive endowments of fertile land and minerals. That potential was already obvious to European observers before the War for Independence, when labour productivity and per capita incomes were perhaps already close to British standards.¹¹ Thereafter, a constellation of highly favourable forces led to the almost inexorable growth of the economy. American success rested upon territorial expansion, some of it at the expense of France, Mexico and Russia; the exploitation of slave and black labour in the old South; rapid demographic growth, complemented by a large influx

⁸ Howard Temperley, *Britain and America Since Independence*, Basingstoke 2002.

⁹ Harry Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations, 1783–1952*, London 1954.

¹⁰ David Traxel, 1898: *The Birth of the American Century*, New York 1998

¹¹ Richard Vedder, *The American Economy in Historical Perspective*, Belmont, CA 1976, Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *The Reinterpretation of American Economic History*, New York 1971.

of healthy, skilled and semi-skilled adolescents from Europe; abundant resources, attracting dominant shares of the funds available for investment on London and other European capital markets; and finally the diffusion of homogeneous tastes and mass markets, reinforced after the Civil War by an intensified process of ideological, linguistic, legal and cultural assimilation to the aims and aspirations of American capitalism.¹²

Unencumbered by social distinctions, protected from external aggression or problems of internal security, lightly taxed and regulated, and with ready access to European skills, capital and technology, the integrated economy of the United States could hardly fail to grow more rapidly than the economies of its industrializing rivals in Western Europe.¹³ Shortly after the Civil War its national output exceeded those of Britain, France and Germany combined. By the 1870s there is little doubt that the United States offered the majority of its white citizens higher standards of living and prospects for upward mobility than anything available in Europe. By the 1890s, the gap in real per capita incomes had become significant and it increased monotonically down to the middle of the twentieth century. Under conditions of postwar convergence, the average differential in real incomes between Europe and the United States then narrowed from around 47 to 62 per cent; but in scale and scope the American economy still remains larger and technologically more sophisticated than those of the now integrating European Union.¹⁴

No doubt Europeans have only themselves to blame for their failures to keep up, and then catch up, with the economy of the United States. Their barbaric and highly destructive civil wars of 1914–18 and 1939–45, separated by an interregnum of antagonism and neo-mercantilism, surely account for more of Europe's relative retardation than the acclaimed superiority of American technologies, scales of production, institutions, cultural values and those other non-quantifiable factors included, in the neo-classical economist's repertoire of residual explanations, under the elastic label, 'social capabilities'. There were obstacles but never barriers to the diffusion of American know-how.¹⁵ Furthermore, it is

¹² R. Nelson and Gavin Wright, 'Rise and Fall of American Technological Leadership', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 30, 1992.

¹³ S. N. Broadberry, *The Productivity Race: British Manufacturing in International Perspectives 1850–1990*, Cambridge 1997.

¹⁴ Angus Maddison, *The World Economy. A Millennium Perspective*, Paris 2001.

¹⁵ Gavin Wright, 'Origins of American Industrial Success, 1879–1940', *American Economic Review*, 80, 1990.

not clear when, or how far, the techniques and scales of production designed to exploit the North American continent's rich portfolio of natural resources to produce goods and services for mass consumption became optimally efficient for European industries, let alone for its radically different range of agricultures, to adopt.¹⁶

In the wings

Class struggles within European states, together with internecine warfare and imperial rivalry among them, certainly held back their development and created the economic conditions—and political instability—that both encouraged and permitted the emergence of a unique form of American hegemony, over a world in which 'European power' had been on the rise since the Portuguese conquest of Ceuta in 1415. The economic strength and military capacity required to assume such a role had already become apparent during the Great War, when the United States intervened late, and profitably, to prevent the Kaiserreich from becoming the dominant power on the mainland while leaving Britain, as the Germans suggested, to continue as the preponderant power at sea.¹⁷

Thereafter, for roughly a quarter of a century, the American stance towards an international system of weaker, economically retarded, politically unstable and mutually antagonistic powers vacillated between a retreat towards isolation (within its own vast hemisphere of influence and oceanic expanse of home waters) and the actions of a global hegemon in waiting.¹⁸ Thus, while American-funded relief operations helped towards European recovery, and the Dawes and Young plans attempted to rebuild a stable monetary system, Washington's insistence on the full repayment of loans and credits extended to help its wartime allies complemented more serious uncertainties surrounding the whole system of international exchange rates and the servicing of foreign debts. Secondly, American rhetoric in favour of open trading was hardly congruent with the immigration controls and protective legislation against imports passed by Congress.¹⁹ Finally, the Wall Street crash

¹⁶ Moses Abramovitz and Paul David, 'Convergence and Deferred Catch-up' in Ralph Landau et al, eds, *The Mosaic of Economic Growth*, Stanford 1996.

¹⁷ Kathleen Burk, *Britain, America and the Sineus of War 1914-18*, London 1985.

¹⁸ Charles Maier, *In Search of Stability. Explorations in Historical Political Economy*, Cambridge 1987.

¹⁹ Gilbert Ziebura, *World Economy and World Politics 1924-31*, Oxford 1990.

and subsequent collapse of the American banking system, leading to the Great Depression, delivered a severe blow to a fragile international monetary system and world economy recovering falteringly from the disruptions of the Great War.

The responsibility for triggering a crash followed by downturns in investment, production, trade and employment in most sectors of the global economy continues to be debated. Nevertheless, the view that the Great Depression of 1929–32 constituted a political, as well as an economic conjuncture in world history, that it originated in the United States, and that the New Deal did little to assist recovery outside American borders, remains tenable after more than fifty years of economic modelling and historical research.²⁰ One medium-term outcome of the Depression in the realm of political economy, however, was to re-order the perspectives of the American elites responsible for the formation of continental economic policies. Under Franklin Roosevelt, their vistas widened to include the rest of the world, foreign trade, exchange rates and international financial flows as integrated components of their thinking about the economic interests of the United States.²¹

Exercising hegemony

Nothing like a post-Vienna reversion to normal power politics after the chaos of a revolutionary interregnum followed the Second World War, in which an alliance of states, dominated and heavily resourced by America, had inflicted crushing defeats on Germany, Italy and Japan. Already, several years before the (historically unprecedented) unconditional surrender of its enemies, Washington had taken the lead in drawing up plans for the postwar reconstruction of an international economic and political order that would avoid the division of the world economy into competitive and potentially antagonistic British, French, Dutch, Iberian and Russian empires. The United States emerged from a conflict that had been thoroughly destructive for all its competitors with its mobilized economy fully recovered from the long Depression of the thirties. It possessed fiscal capacity, financial strength, a relatively untainted history in international affairs and, above all, the political confidence acquired from managing

²⁰ Michael Bernstein, *The Great Depression: Delayed Recovery and Economic Change in America 1929–39*, Cambridge 1987.

²¹ Frank Costigliola, *Autward Dominion: American Political and Cultural Relations with Europe 1919–33*, Ithaca, NY 1984.

an alliance (not a coalition) of powers that had won so decisive a victory over European fascism and Japanese militarism. Washington was ready, able and willing to take the lead in promoting economic recovery and imposing political stability. With Britain, still afflicted by imperial responsibilities, delusions of grandeur and illusions of a special relationship, among leading supplicants for aid, only the Soviet Union—with strategic frontiers now extended by the Red Army into the heartlands of central Europe—resisted American aspirations for a new international order.²²

Within a year conflict between the two opposed ideologies of communism and capitalism, latent but suppressed in wartime, led to the beginnings of a 'cold war'. For four decades, international relations were dominated by the division of the world into two antagonistic coalitions of armed powers. Most of the remaining states—explicitly or tacitly, and with varying degrees of solidarity or episodes of disloyalty—opted to accept protection from the United States. All pretensions that Europeans could provide more benign and civilized forms of alien rule for the indigenous populations of Asia, Africa and the Middle East were now at an end. Following a barbaric half-century, an American (largely East Coast) establishment, confident in its liberal ideology, historical record and political capacity to manage the international economic and geopolitical order, offered their citizens an alternative to fascism or communism. Despite the rhetorical stance taken by some Third World leaders against American dominance, in most cases elite resistance to the exercise of a well-funded hegemony subsided into tacit compliance.²³ The defeated and occupied Axis powers (as well as Falangist Iberia) had virtually no alternative to incorporation into the Western alliance. Scores of countries recently emancipated from colonial rule, and pre-occupied with state formation, the forging of national identity—often among an ethnically diverse population—and economic development, also looked to Washington for loans and credits, particularly for their armed forces. 'Conditionality' naturally became attached to the aid programmes funded and managed by the us.²⁴

Among European states, only Britain and France maintained the stance, pretence and expense of possessing a spuriously 'autonomous' nuclear

²² Charles Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, Princeton 1975.

²³ Thomas McCormick, *American Half Century: us Foreign Policy in the Cold War and after*, Baltimore 1995.

²⁴ Alan Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945–51*, London 1984.

capability. Other aligned powers—but also non-aligned, ‘Bandung’ governments, such as India’s—made the plausible assumption that they were, explicitly or implicitly, part of a nuclear protectorate and that Washington would fight for them against any threat of takeover by the Soviet Union or Communist China.²⁵ From 1941, the United States signed up to an unparalleled range of security agreements with regimes on every continent, and spanning a wide spectrum of political persuasion. American taxpayers—in a society with a long fiscal tradition of opposition to imperial and federal taxation—have now witnessed six decades of historically unprecedented levels of peacetime expenditures to maintain garrisons, naval bases, airfields, carriers and fleets in every part of the world. The majority of the American electorate have acquiesced and, with occasional lapses into scepticism, patriotically applauded the day-to-day involvement of their politicians, diplomats, armed forces and security services in the formulation, funding and execution of such policies. Presidential programmes that allocate resources to contain communism, or to isolate or destroy potentially disruptive regimes—in Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Panama, Grenada, Libya, Sudan, Serbia, Afghanistan and now Iraq—have usually attracted a substantial majority of popular support.²⁶

Dollar supremacy

Although Washington’s fiscal base penetrates into a highly productive continental economy, federal expenditure on strategic policy—competing with multiple claims more clearly linked to domestic welfare—has been covered only intermittently and partially by taxation. The us budget deficits that emerged during the Second World War have persisted, with only brief remission, into the twenty-first century. Commitments to foreign and strategic objectives, often expensive to maintain, generate increasing governmental claims to the national economy’s inflows and reserves of foreign currency. Unless such commitments are held in check governments must resort to borrowing on both domestic and international capital markets to fund expenditures at home (in dollars) and to purchase foreign goods and assets overseas (in the currencies of other states). For long stretches of the twentieth century, however, American corporations and Federal government have experienced little difficulty in obtaining access to foreign exchange to fund

²⁵ David Reynolds, *One World Divisible: A Global History Since 1945*, London 2000.

²⁶ Stanley Hoffman, *World Disorders*, New York 1998.

state spending, private investment and all other economic transactions with Europe, South America, Asia and Africa. That felicitous reinforcement for the extension of hegemony overseas has been an outcome of the status achieved by the dollar as the key currency within the international monetary system.

Key currencies, held in paper form—bonds, bills, credit notes and cash—are issued as the liabilities of major states that foreign governments, banks, firms and households find cheap and relatively safe to hold in reserve, whether as assets accumulating in value or for the convenience of conducting transactions with the rest of the world. With the inexorable rise of the American economy and its attractions for foreign investors and immigrants, dollars became widely accepted as a hard currency that could be converted into the raw materials, foodstuffs, manufactured goods, services and other tradeables produced more efficiently and cheaply in the United States than anywhere else in the world. That competitive advantage became even stronger during periods of warfare and post-war recovery—from 1914 to 1921, and 1939 to 1952—when European and Japanese rivals lacked the ability to engage in overseas trade. During these years, marked by the 'dollar problem', only the us currency could buy a wide range of the commodities and services demanded by rest of the world. Thus the conditions attached to loans, credits and aid extended by American banks, corporations and the Federal government, as well as satellite agencies of the United Nations, could not easily be evaded by borrowing and buying elsewhere.²⁷

Furthermore, under conventions formulated in the state of New Hampshire in 1944, American voting rights and the dollar became entrenched in the constitution of a reconstructed international monetary system. Rules designed to avoid the instabilities of trade and risks to overseas investment associated with floating, multiple and regulated exchange-rate systems—a persistent problem after 1914—obliged signatories to the Bretton Woods agreement to maintain more or less stable exchange rates with the dollar; and only thus gain access to loans and credits from the IMF and IBRD. The Bretton Woods regime really came on stream with the restoration of convertibility after 1958 and, as an international system of relatively fixed exchange rates, lasted only to the oil crisis of 1971–73. Nevertheless, in constitutional terms it enshrined the dollar as the key currency for all international transactions and as

²⁷ David Calleo, *The Imperious Economy*, Cambridge, MA 1982.

the reserve asset for all monetary systems signing up to the agreement; both augmenting the dollar's status and increasing the willingness of foreign central banks, firms and investors to hold the national currency of the United States.²⁸ For years after the Bretton Woods agreement collapsed and the dollar became unstable in value, fluctuating in relation to gold and strong currencies such as the mark and yen, its status continued to allow American corporations with nothing more than a 'portfolio of paper assets' to purchase real wealth overseas. As De Gaulle never tired of saying, it also provided Washington with a 'paper gold mine' to fund its strategic policies, virtually free of the traditional budget and balance-of-payments constraints that had checked the ambitions of kings, aristocrats, oligarchs and Napoleons for centuries past.²⁹ In their day ducats, guilders and pounds also served as key currencies; but they never allowed the ruling elites of Genoa, Venice, Spain, the Netherlands or the United Kingdom to run deficits for as long and as consistently as governments in Washington.³⁰

Pomp and circumspection

How does this compare with Britain's world role, from 1793 to 1914? Even Chicago economists recognize the need for some kind of international authority to formulate, revise and enforce rules for the conversion of currencies, the settlement of payments and the servicing and amortisation of international debt, in order to facilitate the movement of goods, services and capital across national frontiers. In some sense, but to a restricted political degree, the Bank of England performed those functions for roughly four decades before the First World War. But the Bank never declared or even implicitly accepted any responsibilities for the international monetary system as a whole. It hardly acted as a lender of last resort for British and imperial banks, let alone for the banks and monetary systems of other foreign powers.³¹

By maintaining an unswerving adherence to the full convertibility of its paper liabilities, at a parity that remained fixed between 1819 and

²⁸ Richard Gardner, *Sterling-Dollar Diplomacy*, Oxford 1969.

²⁹ Brian Tew, *The Evolution of the International Monetary System, 1945-77*, London 1977.

³⁰ Charles Kindleberger, *World Economic Primacy, 1500-1900*, Oxford 1973; *The World in Depression 1929-39*, Berkeley 1973.

³¹ Winch and O'Brien, *Political Economy of British Economic Experience*.

1914, the Bank's main role was as an example to other central banks of how to run a stable national system of paper credit. Britain's prestigious economists could, of course, be relied upon to 'prove' that strict adherence to the rules of the gold standard was the only rational way to run a national and conjoined international monetary system which wished to avoid the 'perils' of inflation and exchange-rate instability. For liberals, the gold standard restrained the aspiration of all governments (particularly autocrats) to run budget deficits and spend in ways that were contrary to their citizens' wishes—a message that naturally appealed to democrats, businessmen and creditors who wished to raise funds on the London capital market.²⁹ Although neither the Bank of England nor the Foreign Office conducted programmes to spread the gold standard, the government resisted a campaign to introduce bimetallism into Britain. It was not until after the reunification of Germany that the political and economic appeal of linking paper currencies to gold led to the (rather slow) spread of 'a' gold standard around the world.

Nevertheless, though increasing numbers of states linked, delinked and re-linked their currencies to gold between 1870 and 1914, and maintained sterling as a reserve asset, the policies adopted by national central banks regarding domestic money supply, credit, interest rates and relations with their own sovereign governments, varied across the spectrum from mere expediency to pragmatic flexibility or dysfunctional rigidity.³⁰ Not only was there no paradigm set of rules for the regulation of national money supplies, but the capacity of the Bank of England to even influence policies pursued by other central banks was, in practice, confined to the Dominions and colonies, and to a sample of countries that maintained strong trading links with the United Kingdom.

Any presumed analogy to an orchestra of central banks conducted from London is without substance. In retrospect—and compared to the era of monetary and exchange-rate instability that marked the decades after 1914—the pre-war international monetary system appeared admirably stable. But the appeal of that lost *belle époque* had much more to do with an absence of serious warfare or ideological competition, the integration of national economies through investment in railways, steamships

²⁹ Frank Fetter, *Development of British Monetary Orthodoxy 1797–1875*, Cambridge, MA 1965.

³⁰ Jaime Reis, ed., *International Monetary Systems in Historical Perspective*, Basingstoke 1995.

and telegraphs, and the virtual containment of 'populist' demands for full employment and state welfare than with any mythical properties embodied in a classical gold standard, linked to a supposedly hegemonic role played by the Bank of England in managing an international monetary system for the rest of the world.³⁴

Finally—and in sharp contrast with America's federal reserve system—as directors of a private corporation, the Governors of the Bank never deferred or referred to the British government when formulating or executing rules for the management of the national money supply. For their part, successive Cabinets never presumed that the status of sterling as a key currency and reserve asset for other economies provided the British state with any potential leeway; let alone a warrant for departures from that other golden rule of Victorian political economy, balanced budgets. Only occasionally—during the Crimean and Boer Wars—and on a very small scale did the state fail to cover its annual expenditure from tax revenues. These conjoined structural, ideological and fiscal constraints, an abiding political legacy of reaction to previous centuries of active engagement in power politics and mercantilism, provided Victorian and Edwardian statesmen with virtually no prospects for issuing paper pounds to fund any prolonged and extensive exercise of power.³⁵

If 'British hegemony' can be located anywhere in the historical record from 1793 to 1914 it appeared briefly—but largely in the guise of diplomacy and ideological persuasion rather than in the form of power—in the sphere of foreign trade. The kingdom's policy of diffusing open and free trade into an international economy prone to protectionism and degenerative bouts of mercantilism is (along with liberal navalism) historically famous. It first appeared as a geopolitical strategy after the American War of Independence under Pitt the Younger, went sharply into reverse during the last great European conflict of the mercantilist era of 1793–1815, and was not even placed on the table at the Congress of Vienna. At that famous conjuncture in great-power relations, Castlereagh concentrated on securing a political settlement and

³⁴ Jorge Braga et al, eds, *Currency Convertibility. The Gold Standard and Beyond*, London 1996; B. Eichengreen, ed., *The Gold Standard in Theory and History*, London 1985.

³⁵ Andrew Walter, *World Money and World Power The Role of Hegemony and the International Monetary Order*, New York 1991.

no European state attempted to address the problem of reconstructing an international economic order.⁶

Nearly three decades later, tariff reform and free trade reappeared on Britain's political agenda; but almost entirely as an expedient designed to resolve a serious constitutional split between agrarian and other interests over the protection of grain farming. Britain's Corn Law controversy provided its aristocratic Tory and Whig elites with an opportunity to restrain demands for further constitutional reform and to tidy up the fiscal system by restoring an income tax; it also helped them (too late in the day) to go some way to meeting their responsibilities to Ireland, suffering from the most serious famine to afflict any European population throughout the nineteenth century. Ministers at the time of the 'hungry forties' saw the repeal of both the corn laws and navigation acts, along with imperial preferences, as nothing more than a response to the United Kingdom's own social, constitutional and administrative problems. Neither Peel nor any other statesmen involved in the reformation of fiscal and commercial policy ever pretended to be offering 'public goods' for the international economic order as a whole.⁷

Although the all-powerful Royal Navy had not (as some powers had feared) been used to interfere with the trade of competitors, and Britain had even relinquished the right to interdict neutral ships trading with its enemies in wartime, the subsequent formulation and implementation of a British diplomatic programme for the extension of open trade among nations developed slowly. It only really came on stream during the third quarter of the nineteenth century as a sequence of bilateral treaties, which invariably included most favoured nation clauses.⁸ Free trade—current in intellectual circles even before Adam Smith—then matured into the kingdom's enduring national ideology. Thereafter, and down to the Ottawa agreements of 1932, the success of the Victorian and Edwardian economy, the stability of Britain's parliamentary constitution and the nation's status as a great power all became connected in the short-term memories of politicians and the electorate to a 'conjuncture' in domestic politics when home and imperial markets were opened up to foreign trade, competition and investment.

⁶ Patrick O'Brien and G. A. Pigman, 'Free trade, British hegemony and the international economic order in the 19th century', *Review of International Studies*, 18, 1992.

⁷ Anthony Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846–1946*, Oxford 1997.

⁸ Bernard Semmel, *Liberalism and Naval Strategy*, Boston 1986.

Once again Britain's (second generation) of classical economists and their popularizers, such as Cobden, could be mobilized to 'demonstrate' rigorously—but, for List and his followers, hypocritically—that open trading was the only rational policy to pursue, not merely for their homeland and its vast empire, but for the rest of the world as well. For roughly three decades that message gained sympathy not merely among European and American liberals but with the autocratic rulers of France, Spain, Prussia and the Romanov and Habsburg Empires as well. Impressed with British economic success, anxious to avoid costly bouts of warfare, short of revenues and in search of cheaper food for their potentially disorderly urban working classes, they lowered tariffs. Smaller trading powers (Holland, Portugal and Switzerland) made moves in a British direction entirely congruent with their interests. 'Clients' in South America found British pressures 'irresistible', while the weak Qing, Ottoman, Tokugawa and Siamese empires could be intimidated by actual or threatened use of gunboat diplomacy.³⁹

During a liberal interlude in world affairs, then, the British state took the lead and promoted open trade through a limited programme of persuasion, pressure and occasional use of naval power; which relapsed, to the liberals' chagrin, with the unification of Germany and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. Thereafter, in a more dangerous geopolitical climate marked by rearmament, the scramble for colonies and intensified world-market competition, British statesmen virtually withdrew from any active promotion of open trade on a global scale. Confronted with the revival of protectionism, they convened no international congresses to seek general agreements on trade, tariffs or commercial codes of conduct. Although the Foreign Office negotiated a few bilateral treaties to help British exports, the Cabinet adhered rigidly to a 'unilateralist' version of free trade, declined to barter and hoped that Britain's 'moral' example and the transparent economic rationality of their policies would restrain the rising tide of nationalism and neo-mercantilism which had also, to their annoyance, surfaced in the Dominions.⁴⁰

Their persuasive defence of a popular free-trade tradition led the electorate to reject campaigns for fair trade, protection and imperial preference that might have provided the state with the sanctions required to bargain

³⁹ Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*, Cambridge 1970.

⁴⁰ George Bernstein, *Liberalism and Liberal Politics in Edwardian England*, London 1986.

with France, Germany, America and other major powers for the preservation of an open trading regime.⁴¹ Here, in the sphere of international relations that the British elite and the electorate at large cared most about, the imperial state in London remained circumspect, even timorous, in the use of power—or of any American-style strategic trade policy—to constrain the reversal to protectionism. The infamous episodes of gunboat diplomacy to prop up the Ottoman and open up the Qing Empires occurred largely for geopolitical reasons. The first was part of a strategy to contain the expansionist ambition of the Romanov empire. As for the second, the British navy fought two 'opium wars' to preserve the substantial revenues that the colonial government of India derived from taxing the export of hard drugs to China.⁴² In contrast, the policies of the United States to maintain open trade have relied not so much on diplomatic and ideological persuasion, coupled with example, as on sanctions mediated through the IMF and World Bank; and, above all, on clear threats of retaliation against foreign exports to the world's richest market.⁴³

Foreign restraint

Circumspection and acts of appeasement marked Britain's foreign and strategic as well as its commercial and monetary policies for most of the century after the Congress of Vienna. Although the Victorian state maintained a navy equal to the combined fleets of any two rival powers, committed troops to the mainland during the closing years of the war against Napoleon and, before the rise of Germany, was recognized by other great powers as *primus inter pares*, the aristocratic elite in charge of foreign and imperial relations remained acutely aware of serious constraints on their capacities for decisive action overseas.

Firstly—and especially after taking over from the Mughals in India—they found themselves responsible for the day-to-day government and defence of an enormous empire that included territories, assets and diverse populations on every continent. Year after year, and almost

⁴¹ Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan. Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895–1905*, Princeton 1988.

⁴² William Costin, *Great Britain and China 1833–60*, Oxford 1968.

⁴³ Peter Lindert, 'US Foreign Trade and Trade Policy for the Twentieth Century', in Engerman and Gallman, eds, *Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, vol. 3, Cambridge 2000.

without forethought or permission from London, the frontiers of that empire lengthened and bumped, willy-nilly, against the borders or zones of influence claimed as spheres of operation by rival European and Asian powers. What had been, before 1815, a preoccupation with the security of the realm and the protection of overseas trade, matured into responsibilities for a vulnerable and ever expanding empire from which there could be no escape; and for whose maintenance and defence the size of the domestic economy and its fiscal base remained woefully inadequate.⁴⁴

Furthermore, the ever increasing fiscal and financial resources appropriated by the Hanoverian regime between 1688 and 1815 for the extension of empire, the protection of trade and the achievement of a geopolitical primacy were no longer available to its Victorian and Edwardian successors. After the enormous sums borrowed as loans or expropriated as taxes to defeat French ambitions between 1793 and 1815, it became extremely difficult for nineteenth-century governments to persuade parliaments to sanction any further accumulation of debt or extraction of taxes. To restore trust in aristocratic rule sobriety, along with fiscal retrenchment, the repayment of debt, balanced budgets, *laissez faire*, treasury control and a restrained extension of the franchise, became akin to articles of an unwritten constitution. Britain's *ancien régime* survived right down to the Great War but was fiscally emasculated from any serious engagement in power politics—save for interventions that could be presented as entirely necessary, cheap expedients, designed to preserve the security of the realm, defend an empire of 'kith and kin' overseas and protect the nation's commerce with the rest of the world.

These underlying structural constraints on the size and actions of the state can be represented as the reflexive reaction to 164 years of mercantilism, running from Cromwell's first Anglo-Dutch war of 1651 to an ostensibly triumphant conclusion with Nelson's victory at Trafalgar and Wellington's close-run thing at Waterloo. Britain's heritage of mercantilism and imperialism hardened into a historical myth of 'old corruption' that sustained an ideology of distrust and antipathy towards the state among an expanding electorate and parliaments bent on constitutional reform, which cabinets of aristocrats in control of foreign policy could only contain by embracing prudence, parsimony and *laissez faire*. There

⁴⁴ Patrick O'Brien, 'The Security of the Realm and the Growth of the Economy', in Peter Clarke and Clive Trebilcock, eds, *Understanding Decline, Perceptions and Realities of British Economic Performance*, Cambridge 1997.

could thus be no resort to inflation of the money supply, very little borrowing and virtually no fiscal recourse beyond cuts and rationalization in taxes. Not only were these structural parameters a requirement for restoring and sustaining trust in the continuation of aristocratic government, they allayed the fears among all men of property—landed, commercial and industrial alike—that extensions to the franchise would lead eventually to higher and potentially redistributive taxation.⁴⁵

Britain's unwritten fiscal constitution, with its rigid adherence to the gold standard, balanced budgets and *laissez faire*, goes a long way to account for the anxious and circumscribed role played by an ostensibly powerful state in international relations from 1815–1914. Foreign secretaries before Gray consistently avoided any entanglement in European power politics. They renounced all title claims to territory across the Channel, including Hanover. British influence on the redrawing of frontiers on the mainland, or on movements for national unification or independence, can be represented as largely diplomatic and rhetorical. Continental commitments of troops to theatres of war in Europe, North America and China were resolutely avoided, apart from that restricted conflict in the Crimea, 1854–56; later regarded as a misallocation of troops and naval power to prop up the Ottoman Empire and check Russian ambitions in the Balkans.⁴⁶

Outside the Indian Subcontinent and Africa, British troops were scarcely ever deployed against the armies of other powers. When coercion was required to secure or defend a national objective, naval power was invariably the preferred option. But like air power today, navies operated at a distance and offshore; this constrained what could be achieved by bombarding and degrading the ports and coastal fortifications of states hostile to British interests. Even sea power was used with circumspection, in order to preclude the expensive naval arms races that had marked the long era of mercantilism from 1415–1815.⁴⁷ Meanwhile for the defence and expansion of empire the British state relied, in part, on a virtually privately funded officer corps, recruited from the aristocracy and gentry for 'service in the colours', and on unskilled, poorly paid white soldiers from the urban underclass and Celtic fringe; but depended overwhelmingly upon a large army of Indian mercenaries,

⁴⁵ Bernstein, *Liberalism and Liberal Politics*.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830–1902*, Oxford 1970.

⁴⁷ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, London 1983.

paid for by taxes collected in India and drafted for imperial service in spheres of conflict far beyond the Subcontinent. Thus—the Navy, as ever, apart—the ‘forces of the crown’ were equipped up to, but not beyond, European standards of technical proficiency, managed by amateur or at best semi-professional officers, and dominated in numerical strength by Indians, whose reliability after the Mutiny remained a matter of anxiety to Ministers in London as well as Viceroy in Delhi.⁴⁸

Britain’s military and naval basis for primacy thus depended far more on the persistent weakness of defeated European rivals—France, the Netherlands, Iberia; on Prussia’s and Piedmont’s absorption with the tasks of unifying Germany and Italy; and on the compensation derived by rival territorial empires (run from St Petersburg, Vienna or Washington) from overland expansion, than on any economic, military or cultural capabilities embodied in its own endowments or institutions. Britain’s position in great-power politics continued to depend overwhelmingly on the Royal Navy, the decline of the Ottoman and Qing empires and the geopolitical preoccupations prevalent within Europe for roughly a century after the Congress of Vienna.⁴⁹ The aristocratic and imperial elites who ran the Victorian and Edwardian state seem, moreover, to have been aware that any attempt to move forward from primacy to hegemony would be risky, expensive and, given the pressure for democracy, might lead to the demise of their adaptable but essentially *ancien* regime. They appreciated that their privileged social and political position depended on a tradition of deference to birth and status that was passing with the years and required caution to preserve.⁵⁰

In comparative perspective, the British ruling elite—with Palmerston the ‘romantic’ exception—lacked, not unrealistically, the confidence that the US Establishment has displayed since 1941 in the economic capacity and political mission of its country for the exercise of global hegemony.⁵¹ Although the far smaller British economy was progressive, the government’s ability to appropriate revenues and raise loans ran into

⁴⁸ Patrick O’Brien, ‘The Imperial Component in the Rise and Decline of the British Economy’, in Michael Mann, ed., *The Rise and Decline of the Nation-State*, Oxford 1990.

⁴⁹ Muriel Chamberlain, ‘Pax Britannica?’ *British Foreign Policy 1789–1914*, London 1988.

⁵⁰ Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Imperial Century 1815–1914*, Basingstoke 1993.

⁵¹ Donald Watt, *Personalities and Policies*, London 1965.

sharply diminishing returns after the Napoleonic War. Diplomatically, in its attempts to maintain a balance of power and attenuate envy of its colonial and commercial preponderance, appeasement—rather than dynamic leadership—appears to have been a constant of British foreign policy right down to its apogee in the 1930s.⁵² Ideologically, the British elite represented their state as peaceful and tolerant, and themselves as democratic civilized gentlemen. Liberals could favourably compare their constitutional regime to Continental alternatives. Nevertheless French 'style' retained its established prestige and Albion was also widely regarded as 'perfidious'.⁵³

The contrast between Anglo and American cultures cannot be underestimated as a novel component of twentieth-century rule. For decades, powerful images of American consumer society have been diffused to increasing masses all over the world via radio, TV, films, popular music, the internet and cheap travel—accompanied by visually spectacular evidence of us military might and technological capabilities. The emergence of culture as a mode of power clearly predated 1941, and it has been argued here that aspects of British liberalism also possessed international appeal before 1914. Such influence is, nevertheless, distinctively modern and represents a discontinuity in international relations resulting from mass consciousness, popular democracy and advanced media of communication. Cultural power provides Washington with a strong supplement to its already massive economic and coercive powers, enabling it not merely to pay or compel others to do its bidding, but to help them actively embrace what the hegemon desires.⁵⁴

Collapse of the paradigm

All this would suggest that the architecture of theories which represent the long-term history of geopolitical relations in terms of a succession of hegemonies lacks the bricks and mortar of history to provide it with plausibility. Attempts to apply the 'hegemon' label to the Genoese, Venetian and Dutch States, let alone Sung China, carry little weight. I have argued that the paradigm case of hegemonic succession from Great Britain to the United States can be degraded by a sequence of exercises in history

⁵² Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*.

⁵³ Peter Taylor, *The Way the Modern World Works. World Hegemony to World Impasse*, Chichester 1996

⁵⁴ Olivier Zunz, *Why the American Century?*, Chicago 1998.

designed to compare the circumstances in which both states emerged to positions of leadership; the economic, fiscal, financial and cultural bases available to them as supports for the deployment of coercion and influence; the proclaimed intentions of their two very different political elites; and the actual reach and effectiveness of the power exercised by the United States since 1941, as opposed to Britain from 1793 to 1914. After so many qualifications, what seems to be left of the hegemonic succession paradigm? What is the relevance of theory without history?⁵⁵

First (and laudably!) a search for recurrent patterns in international relations that might be 'imposed' on the long and complex history of great-power politics in order to ascertain if the arenas in which states interact do embody systemic variables that might give rise to periods, even cycles, of stability and instability. Perhaps less laudable, however, is the inclination of some Anglo-American intellectuals to find the notion of a civilized world leadership, exercised since 1815 by two English-speaking states, entirely pleasing to contemplate and profitable to pursue.⁵⁶ The historical evidence suggests that, whether the powers at stake are conceived as malignant or benign, the representation of the Pax Britannica as an antecedent or precedent for the hegemony of the United States is essentially a myth.

⁵⁵ C. Elman and M. Elman, eds, *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists and the Study of International Relations*, Cambridge, MA 2001.

⁵⁶ Donald Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place 1900–75*, Cambridge 1984.

Palestine America

Mohammed Bamyeh, special issue editor



In the decades of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the full complexity of the strife has seldom been fully detailed. This special issue seeks to intervene by offering a critique of the Palestinian experience. Mapping the complicated relationship among Palestine, the United States, and Israel, this issue includes critical essays on the politics, culture, literature, and history of the Palestinian people.

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REVIEWS

Andrew Meier, *Black Earth. A Journey Through Russia After the Fall*, W. W. Norton: New York and London 2003, \$28.95, hardback 511 pp, 0 393 05178 1

GEORGI DERLUGUIAN

UNDER FOND WESTERN EYES

How the Western exchange students used to puzzle us, their Soviet dorm-mates, back in the early eighties at Moscow State University. Many had arrived expecting to see tanks in the streets and police patrols with barking dogs. Instead, they found the very safe, if impossibly sprawling, imperial capital of the USSR; and seemed impressed to be able to buy Soviet shampoo or ballpoint pens—which we, frankly, would rather have exchanged for what we saw as their infinitely more elegant and reliable BICs. And when it came to the end of their year-long stay in our cold climes, these exotic yet earnest creatures would infallibly moan, ‘Oh, how I hate the thought of going back to Princeton (Oxford, Tokyo, Uppsala)’. They had caught the bug.

But what bug? What fascination could there be in the Stalinist grannies with their red armbands, zealously checking passes at the University entrance, or the overboiled buckwheat gruel and sticky stroganoff in the student canteen? True, there was a lot of inventiveness in the many little subversive tricks one had to play on the system, in order to navigate its irrational innards. You could not just walk into the campus bookshop or library, as at Princeton, and pick up what you wanted to read. The good things were not readily available—either too much in demand, ‘ideologically suspect’, or both. To buy a volume of Fernand Braudel meant camping outside the shop, long before opening hours, on a tip-off from a friend with publishing connexions; and then snapping up not just one book but the whole crate, for

friends back at the dorm or as exchange currency—to barter, say, for Ray Bradbury. (I got my copy of *The Wretched of the Earth* for an old *Playboy*.) Or you might befriend a young lady librarian at *Spetskhran*, the ‘special’ restricted-access collection of foreign material, and beg to borrow something illicit, like *New Left Review*, overnight, to binge read until the small hours. True, too, that whenever we got together, in the kitchens or on the stairwells, we would chain-smoke, drink and talk about whatever lay outside the stale official ideology: from Fellini’s *Amarcord* and Djilas’s *New Class* to Pink Floyd and the sexual revolution. In retrospect, there were many thrilling moments for us young intellectual smugglers; especially since the Soviet system had become too sclerotic to catch us, and adolescent fascination with breaking the rules was usually safe.

During perestroika, an encounter with a husband-and-wife team of co-practising Californian therapists provided a useful insight into why the young Slavic enthusiasts seemed so terribly earnest to us. This prosperous pair were early arrivals among the motley crew of missionaries who—earnestly, of course—sought to help improve the newly liberated Russia, after America’s own image. They had come to spread the word about a fashionable mental-wellness technique called neuro-linguistic programming, which involved the detection and evaluation of the interlocutor’s psychological defence mechanisms, before the therapist attempted to establish a rapport. Ranging from jokes to facial expressions, body language and eye movement, such mechanisms are—as they explained to me, their interpreter, over drinks on our last evening—to be found in all socially competent humans, serving to hide what one might feel like keeping to oneself. A ‘normal’ adult should have about eight such subconscious devices, used interchangeably; a reclusive personality might display a dozen; over twenty was clear cause for alarm. In the car from the airport and over our first dinner, the Californians had counted twenty-seven defence mechanisms in my behaviour; next morning at breakfast they detected a couple more. Within a few days, they realized that we, the natives, all possessed dozens of pre-rational tricks which we would casually wield in interactions with strangers, while remaining polite and intellectually engaged—if perhaps a little too cynical for American tastes. Their models, they came to understand, summarized not an abstract human norm but the mean measurements of their native Orange County. Young urban Soviets carried, on average, thrice thicker insulation.

These insulating layers, however, were worn situationally, like clothing; their thickness depended on the interaction’s setting. In the endless queues, or at official meetings, the therapists might have observed further defensive quirks of Soviet behaviour: we could go super-cynically chatty or, conversely, self-induce a deep trance state, which we regarded as simply falling asleep with our eyes open. But the carapace could also get much thinner, and then

the clicks and sparks of human connexion could fly in every direction. In the informal circles of friends, and friends of friends—like-minded people, summarily referred to as *vse svoi*, ‘all ours’—defences could be dropped altogether; and then what Saint-Exupéry, cult author for the educated Soviet generation of the sixties and seventies, termed the ‘sumptuousness of human interaction’ would freely flow. And here, most probably, lies the bug that so many Westerners catch. A visiting scholar from Berkeley, of all places, expressed it succinctly, if perhaps too sweepingly: ‘America is an emotional desert’.

Emotional variety and intensity of experience surely provide a better explanation than Slavophilic ruminations on spirituality to the question why, generation after generation, Russia continues to fascinate Westerners. The great sociologists, Goffman, Collins, Stinchcombe, might help us to understand not only the nature of the attraction but also its source: the persistent under-institutionalization of Russian life. No longer a *Gemeinschaft* community, bound and scripted by traditions—with the possible exception of places like Chechnya—nevertheless, Russia ever since Peter the Great has recurrently fallen short of the capitalist *Gesellschaft* where, in theory at least, a cold and formal rationality should govern the greater part of human interaction. In the Soviet Union, so the old joke went, a problem would be fixed with a sledgehammer and a lot of hearty swearing. The reason it could not be otherwise was that, for most of its history, Russia has been suspended in some kind of transition: never a finished ‘thing’, but always catching up or falling behind the West. This, incidentally, illuminates another advantage enjoyed by Western visitors in the eighties—the flattering boost to their personal status, in a country where all things Western were matters of great curiosity: desirable, exotic yet unattainable, and often forbidden. Lastly, one could feel another exhilarating emotion in the Soviet Union during its final years; one that Bakunin, describing Paris in 1848, had called the emotional inebriation of revolution. The subterranean roar of the coming earthquake was felt everywhere; but in burying the *USSR*, it left rubble in its wake.

Andrew Meier is one of those Western Slavists who, arriving in the last years of the Soviet Union, caught the bug and stayed on in Russia for too long to remain the same person; but also got beyond the early exuberance of initiation into Russian life. Taken on, after a while, as *Time* magazine’s Moscow correspondent, his book *Black Earth* is in part an account of experiences that his Washington editors did not want to run. Although Meier’s work has been compared to David Remnick’s *Lenin’s Tomb* (1993) and *Resurrection* (1997)—both authors have produced vast and complex canvases, veritable encyclopaedias of post-communist Russia, packed with evocative micro-pictures and colourfully drawn characters—the two depict quite different countries. Where Remnick saw ‘resurrection’, the

misty dawn of something new and promising—and has been accused of Clintonite apologies for Yeltsin's 'reforms'—Meier paints a gloomier picture of the vast country, struggling to keep on track and find its place in the world; or, Russia as usual.

Meier's title comes from Mandelstam:

How pleasing fatty topsoil is to ploughshare,
How silent the steppe in its April upheavall
Well, I wish you well, black earth: be firm, sharp-eyed . . .
A black-voiced silence is at work

Steeped in the country's literature, it is perhaps the most poetic, in its tonality and composition, of all the recent crop of journalistic offerings on the country's post-socialist drift; in this sense, it reaches back to Gogol's *Dead Souls* or even Radishchev's *Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow*. Chekhov's 1890 trip to Sakhalin Island, to report on the plight of the *katorzhane*, the shackled labourers in the Tsarist penal colonies there, is one of many thick threads that weave Russia's past into its present. Meier also differs from Western chroniclers such as Chrystia Freeland or David Hoffman in his unwillingness to restrict himself to the new, or reminted, ruling class, in the Moscow palaces, offices, salons, shopping malls and nightclubs that have served as the backdrop for so many of his colleagues' coverage of Russia's 'transition' over the last decade.

Instead, he looks beyond Moscow, and below the level of the *nouveaux riches*, to what he sees as the common Russians, and some Chechens, of the provinces. In this sense, Meier's work might be seen as a continuation of the critical realist tradition of the *narodniki*, who left the capital to wander among the 'people', observing their difficult lives and finding examples of human dignity amid 'the mud, stench, and violence' of ordinary existence—a literary and intellectual lineage that is now almost extinct among Russians themselves. Both refreshing and, in some respects, frustrating, this is quite literally a pedestrian view of reality: in all his years in Russia, Meier never acquired a car but would flag down a lift—'voting', as it is called—to share in the life and conversation of his chance host at the steering wheel. The choice, as he presents it, is fundamentally a moral one—to stay with the people, to experience ordinary Russia and the vastness of its distances.

For *Black Earth* is a travelogue of epic proportions. Though he begins and ends in Moscow, the centre in every sense, Meier takes us to all points of the compass. North to Norilsk, sailing slowly along the great Siberian river Yenisei, as the mountains turn to plains and then to tundra; passing the Soviet-era nuclear facilities buried in the rocks, the place of Stalin's exile in the 1910s, the remnants of camps. Once run by the Gulag, today the Arctic Circle mining town is controlled by the multibillion-dollar financial-industrial

conglomerate of Vladimir Potanin, who rose in less than a decade from being an inconspicuous young functionary at the Ministry of Foreign Trade to join the murderous inner circle of Russia's super rich. Potanin acquired a controlling stake in Norilsk Nickel for \$170 million—a fraction of its true value—in an auction rigged in his favour by the government, as reward for his vital donations to Yeltsin's 1996 presidential campaign. Like the other oligarchs, Potanin mostly keeps his vast fortune 'offshore', safe from his partners, shareholders, tax collectors and, of course, his employees. The workers, however, get something like \$700 a month—enviable wages by contemporary Russian standards—and so endure the Norilsk landscape of industrial devastation, the ferociously cold climate, the isolation and the months-long darkness of Arctic night. What happens to the non-essential population—children, pensioners, or the workers whose jobs the new managers consider redundant—is quite a different story.

East, from Vladivostok and Ussuriysk, just north of the PRC border—where Meier finds a Chinese bazaar of cargo ship containers swollen into a village, stalls brimming with knock-off copies of Western designer labels (DICKY)—to the foul weather and sullen prostitutes of Sakhalin, whose southern tip is only a narrow strait but, economically and socially, an ocean away from Japan. The spectacle of anomie, economic depression, reigning corruption and organized crime might just as well be witnessed by a suburban train ride of no more than fifteen minutes in any direction outside Moscow's city limits; but its reputation as Alexander II's Devil's Island makes Sakhalin, inevitably, a more exotic location. Meier manages to trace descendants of the *katorzhane*, proud to find their family name in Chekhov's extensive database—he filed some 7,500 report cards—of what would today be 'human-rights violations'.

West, by the midnight train, to the damp and decrepit 'northern capital', where Meier, inevitably, conjures literary ghosts—but also the infamous one-armed godfather of the post-Soviet underworld, Vladimir Kumarin, who lost his limb not, as per jet-set rumour, in Afghanistan but during the mafia wars that raged in the politically fractured and violently contested landscape of Petersburg in the 1990s. And finally south, to Chechnya, which occupies a special place in Meier's travelogue; and for good reason. The 'Zone', as many insiders almost superstitiously call it, is a place apart. Meier goes there on his own, to investigate the killings of (mainly) elderly Chechen civilians in the village of Aldy, shortly after it was taken by Russian forces in February 2000.

For anyone who has been following the tragedy of this tiny country in the Caucasus, the picture will be all too familiar. On one side there are the Chechens, most of them struggling to live in the 'small corner of hell' that their land has become; some, if not many, of whom have been helping—for

ideological, family or pecuniary reasons, or just out of fear—the men with guns, such as the notorious Shamil Basayev, who pass variously as armed resistance fighters, terrorists, Islamic jihadists or bandits and warlords. On the other side are the Russian troops, faced with a shortage of almost everything a modern army might expect: discipline, clear lines of command, steady supplies, career prospects, professional skills or even camaraderie. Nor does this army possess any clear ideological commitment, beyond a seething rage over the humiliation of Soviet superpower. When the troops get angry—at everything, perhaps—or feel threatened and frustrated by unseen Chechen snipers, and with no fear of punishment from their superiors, they commit such horrors as happened in Aldy.

Meier tends to rely too much on psychological explanations for my sociological taste, but in this instance he may be right. The killings were probably not a part of any Russian plan. They flowed from the brutality of this shadowy war with unclear goals and strategy, where the weak Russian state prefers to cover up the 'indulgencies' and criminal mayhem wrought by its underpaid and dispirited soldiery, because otherwise, nobody would fight against Chechen separatism—and Moscow refuses to learn how to deal with the problem in any other way. The imploded post-Soviet state is so weak, institutionally and morally, that the decaying rump of the army may be all it has left at its disposal.

There is, however, a more sinister aspect. In St. Petersburg, Meier tracks down the commander of the Special Police unit that was in Aldy at the time the massacre was perpetrated. The officer agrees to meet with the American journalist and—the usual tactic—admits the obvious fact, that the village was situated in his unit's 'area of competence', in order to deny the accusations and profess complete ignorance of the crimes. For whatever reason, the officer invites Meier to lunch and even introduces him to his wife; who, like many of his soldiers' wives, also works for the Special Police. As the conversation goes on, it becomes clear without direct admission: yes, they were there, and who else would have done it? Of course the officer knows. But he does not regret it. Perhaps because he is angry, with the professional anger of the uniformed man, to whom state coercion is not just a job but a social identity. He is angry because the police are underpaid, like all state servants in Russia—even if they are in a position to devise other means of income. But at a deeper, existential level he is permanently angry that people no longer respect or fear enough his uniform and his special role in life. This seems a typical feeling among the more active supporters of Putin's return to 'normalcy'.

Like any true epic, *Black Earth* encompasses not just war but quest and discovery; heroism; love in an unlikely setting (a tiny gem: a Gulag prison guard proposes to a woman inmate and pledges to await her release); horrendous suspicion, with no possibility of resolution (a Soviet general, taken

prisoner by the Germans in the early days of the war, later accused by the NKVD of joining a Nazi execution squad); tales of survival, in Stalin's time and today; bitter irony and humour; and even literary-historical sex, in the form of Chekhov's curiously equine description—written, on lavender-coloured paper in his elegant, miniature hand, to his publisher, Suvorin—of his encounter with a Japanese girl in a Sakhalin brothel: 'In the act she exhibits such sublime mastery that you feel no longer a customer but a rider in an equestrian lesson of the finest school'. (The letter had been hidden away by Soviet archivists as a potential affront to the honour of the nation's great classical tradition.) The main tonality of *Black Earth*, however—and here it is not so different from many other Western works—is that of a vast tragedy, of a ruined country and a deceived people who meet their fate with stoicism; for what else remains?

The book presents a striking mosaic of contemporary Russia, teeming with characters, from old dissident intellectuals to pauperized workers and students, moguls, policemen and racketeers; Putin enters at the end, inauspicious as this former secret agent tends to be; the latest Russian enigma. Yet the author scarcely attempts to indicate any causal linkages between the many facets of this vast canvas. At most, Meier recurrently turns to the discussion of how the Russians—unlike West Germans after 1945—have failed to repent of their guilty authoritarian past, in which he evidently sees the source of their troubles and misery. One is tempted to ask: what of Japan's hidden authoritarian history, and its relation to the dynamics of the post-war economy? Here, no doubt, lies the reason why *Black Earth* could garner praise from Brzezinski and Conquest for its dust jacket: paragons of the view that Russia is totalitarian by its very nature. Inside Russia, and especially within the intellectual elite, the publishers might have found even more authoritative voices to issue moral condemnations of the country's past.

Following the dictum of Major Makarov, the infamous political instructor at Moscow State University's Division of Military Training—'our Soviet propaganda does not leave any questions unanswered, even rhetorical ones'—let me briefly suggest an alternative explanation. Meier correctly senses some sort of tragic incompleteness, perhaps even a dangerous unwholeness, in Russia's transformation. But he fails to recognize that the incoherence lies not in social morality but in political economy, and public institutions. Its cause is not the psychology but the truncation of the Russian revolutionary sequence. There is, after all, a price to be paid for avoiding full-blown revolution.

Stalinism was a particularly brutal, despotic and over-militarized variety of what, a generation ago, Chalmers Johnson—referring to modern Japan—termed the developmental state. Its strategy was to concentrate control of economic assets in the hands of the central bureaucracy; the populace would be treated as a sub-species of asset, either as labour force or military recruits;

all such forces would then be directed towards the goal of catching up with the advanced capitalist countries. The name of Bismarck is firmly associated with this coercive strategy, although its lineage may be traced back to Absolutist statesmen such as Colbert or, for that matter, Peter the Great. The ideological colouring of the Soviet regime, combined with the Cold War climate, prevented thinkers on both right and left from recognizing it as a particular variety of ultra-bureaucratic developmental state, whose strategic goals and means belonged squarely within the spectrum of contemporary reactions to the geopolitical and economic collapse at the core of the world-system, between 1914 and 1945.

The pinnacle of Soviet developmentalism was the victory of 1945. During the war, the USSR had produced almost three times as many tanks as the whole Nazi Reich (despite the fact that Moscow had been begging the Germans in vain, as late as 1929, to impart the secrets of their armour-plating technology, counter to Versailles strictures). The Soviet economy continued to grow at impressive rates for almost two decades and, under Khrushchev, finally began to benefit the population; from the late 1960s, however, it began to slow down. Brezhnev, commonly blamed for the stagnation, was not the cause but merely a symptom. Vladimir Popov has suggested an elegant theoretical formulation which relates the strengths and weaknesses of a command economy to the different phases in its material life cycle. Given the support of the necessary state institutions, such an economy should normally be more successful than capitalist markets in achieving short and medium-term targets in the mass production of material output, such as is needed for rapid industrialization or winning wars. However, the effectiveness of this type of economic apparatus declines rapidly after approximately thirty years when, in Popov's estimate, the amortization of over half the industrial assets reaches the point of replacement. For this task, command economies of the Soviet variety possessed neither the appropriate legal and organizational mechanisms nor the ideological justification. It could simply prove impossible to restructure or shut down an obsolete factory that had once served as the pride of the first Five Year Plan, or continued—as in Norilsk—to provide the livelihood of a whole town.

Another contradiction was built into the Soviet-style apparatus: the inherent tendency of mid-level bureaucrats to parcellize their offices into self-contained bailiwicks. The central government, in the absence of a non-official press, competitive elections or price-setting markets, lacked the mechanisms to restrain its own bureaucratic subordinates, save by lashing out in periodic propaganda campaigns or relying on Secret Police reports and repression. With the death of Stalin and the ouster of Khrushchev, the Soviet nomenklatura gained their paradise. The inhuman work pace of previous regimes was over and deadly purges were no longer a threat. There

was also growing pressure from educated Soviet specialists and workers who, during the 1960s, began to coalesce into a self-conscious layer or, as some dissident ideologists called it, 'civil society'. The nomenklatura, fearful of reactivating the monster of the Secret Police, opted instead to offer more sausage and a very hypocritical dissimulation of public politics. The accumulated industrial base, with the help of petrodollars after 1973, made the death of Soviet developmentalism pretty comfortable.

Russia has paid a heavy price for the conservative repression of the reform movement of the 1960s. There was enough revolutionary impetus, after 1989, to destroy the communist state and bring to power opportunistic populists like Yeltsin; but there was far from enough to reconstitute the state structures and use them in managing the transition to capitalist markets. As a result, opportunism and greed spread like brushfire throughout the collapsing Soviet institutions. The nomenklatura rushed to organize soft landings for themselves, grabbing whatever lay close to hand: factories, mines, shops; or whole provinces and newly independent republics. In this process, the disintegrating bureaucracy was helped by a swarm of nimble fixers. The luckiest of these grabbed enough for themselves to become potentates in their own right, and came to be called the oligarchs. But in the ensuing chaos, they wrecked the country's economy and geopolitical position to such an extent that Russia, after all the sacrifices of previous generations, recoiled back towards the periphery of the capitalist world and is still grappling with the realization that, instead of the promised land of the USA, it got something more like Latin America.

Fortunately Meier, like the great literary figures he admires, is capable of containing contradictions. The book itself presents strong enough evidence against its main thesis—that, if only the Russians faced the past evils of Stalinism, their present and near future could be better. One can hardly accuse the dissident historian, Roy Medvedev, or the parents of Krichevsky—one of the three young men who fell in August 1991, fighting the reactionary coup—of such ignorance or lack of moral compass. These people clearly view Yeltsin's market and political reforms as a disaster, and yet have pinned what hopes they have to the authoritarianism of his anointed successor. Something does not add up in Meier's picture, and his work is the better for it. The picture rings true overall, its rudimentary moralizing notwithstanding. Andrew Meier is not just a Slavist who loves and knows the object of his study. He also tells us something important about the dark side of contemporary globalization. These seem to me good reasons to recommend his book.

Gabriel García Márquez, *Living to Tell the Tale*, translated by Edith Grossman

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EFRAÍN KRISTAL

LESSONS FROM THE GOLDEN AGE

One April day in 1950 the 22-year-old writer, eaten up with nerves, offers the rough typescript of his first novel to the old Catalan dramatist, Don Ramón Vinyes, leading spirit of their bohemian group. Putting on his spectacles, Don Ramón smooths the pages out on the café table and reads, without any variation in his expression, the opening section of what would become *Leaf Storm*. Then, replacing his spectacles in their case, and the case in his breast pocket, he makes a few comments on the novelist's handling of time—which was, as García Márquez admits here, 'my life-or-death problem'; without doubt, the 'most difficult of all'.

This portrait of the artist as a young man is no late, lazy memoir but a literary work in its own right, which recounts—or recreates—the process of García Márquez's formation as a writer within a highly wrought temporal framework. *Living to Tell the Tale* opens two months earlier, in *medias res*, as the author's mother, in mourning garb, threads her way lightly between the tables of the Mundo bookshop in Barranquilla, a stone's throw from Don Ramón's café, to confront her errant son with a mischievous smile: 'before I could react she said, "I'm your mother"'. And next, 'in her customary, ceremonial way: "I've come to ask you to please go with me to sell the house"'.

From here, time will double forward and back. The slow journey towards the old family home in Aracataca opens up vistas on to the past—

the white peaks of the sierra seemed to come right down to the banana plantations on the other side of the river [so that] as children, we dreamed of shaping balls of the perpetual snow and playing war on the parched, burning streets . . . The heat was so implausible that . . . from the day I was born I heard it said, over and over again, that the rail lines and camps of the United

Frut Company had been built at night because during the day the sun made the tools too hot to touch.

But it also, of course, anticipates the future—the moment in 1965, still ten years ahead at the end of this book, when, driving his family to Acapulco on holiday, García Márquez finds one of the twentieth century's most famous first sentences forming in his head: 'Many years later, facing the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice'. He turns the car round and roars back to Mexico City, locks himself in his room for eighteen months, smoking cigarettes stump to tip, and writes *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Yet in another sense, *Living to Tell the Tale* begins long after the wind at the end of that novel has blown everything away. The old house in Aracataca has gone to rack and ruin by the time García Márquez and his mother arrive there, peopled by unevictable tenants; they are unable to make a cent from it. Echoing one of the most recurrent, indeed predictable, patterns in García Márquez's fiction, what was intended is not fulfilled as one had expected, but as destiny wills. Instead of money, the journey provides García Márquez with his principal literary inspiration. He sees the arid little square in Ciénaga where, in 1928, the Colombian army had mown down the striking banana workers—in his grandfather's version, as recounted in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: the three thousand men, women and children motionless under the savage sun, as the officer in charge gives them five minutes to clear the streets. He hears the stories of his parents' courtship—the beautiful daughter of the elite Liberal family pursued by an ambitious Conservative telegraph operator; his colleagues conspiring to tap out love messages down the wires, as her parents whisk her to safety—that inspired both *Leaf Storm* and *Love in the Time of Cholera*. He recalls his close relationship with his grandfather, who had fought in Colombia's devastating civil wars and who resurfaces in several fictional characters, including *No One Writes to the Colonel*. Gazing from the train window as they pull slowly through the green silence of the banana groves, García Márquez is taken with the name of an old plantation, 'Macondo', which will feature as the tropical town in so many of his tales and novels.

The centrepiece of the journey back is a Proustian experience, as he and his mother are invited to lunch at the home of the poor but dignified family doctor:

From the moment I tasted the soup, I had the sensation that an entire sleeping world was waking in my memory. Tastes that had been mine in childhood and that I had lost when I left the town reappeared intact with each spoonful, and they gripped my heart.

But if the raw material for his fiction was to be the *real maravilloso* of the Colombian Caribbean, what of its form? García Márquez has often told the story of discovering, in Kafka's 'Metamorphosis', the same impassive narration of the extraordinary that he remembered from his maternal grandmother's tales. There is further homage to Tranquilina Iguarán here, as to his aunts and to Doña Juana de Freytes, who would retell stories for the children drawn from the *Odyssey*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Don Quixote* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. The 'popular memory' of Aracataca's inhabitants, he found, would often correct or contradict official accounts of historical events. At school and college, first in Barranquilla and then Bogotá (where 'an insomniac rain had been falling since the beginning of the sixteenth century') his time was devoted to 'reading whatever I could get my hands on, and reciting from memory the unrepeatable poetry of the Spanish Golden Age'.

After 1948, fleeing the violence and repression that swept Bogotá following the assassination of the Liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, García Márquez returned to Barranquilla, one of the safest cities in the country. It was at this stage that he fell in with the group around Don Ramón Vinyes. 'It is difficult to imagine the degree to which people lived then in the shadow of poetry', he writes here of his literary education:

We not only believed in poetry, and would have died for it, but we also knew with certainty—as Luis Cardoza y Aragón wrote—that 'poetry is the only concrete proof of the existence of man'. The world belonged to the poets. Their new works were more important for my generation than the political news, which was more and more depressing.

Of equal importance were the Modernist writers, newly available to a Spanish reading public in the translations produced by Jorge Luis Borges and his circle in Buenos Aires—'we waited for the travelling salesmen from the Argentine publishers as if they were envoys from heaven'. Faulkner, Woolf, Conrad, Graham Greene, Joyce, Gide, Kafka, Mann and Borges himself were devoured by the Barranquilla group, along with the Greek classics that would inform, for example, the Sophoclean *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*.

It was here in Barranquilla under the vicious regime of Laureano Gómez that García Márquez began to develop his *métier* as a writer, published his first short stories and gained his initial literary reputation, while eking out an existence as a journalist. His life as a reporter became progressively more difficult as, under Rojas Pinilla, the censorship increased still further. In 1954, his serialized 'Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor'—an account of a Colombian navy vessel that had sunk on its way back from Alabama—attracted the wrath of the authorities. According to the official version, the ship had been wrecked in a terrible storm, and the drowned sailors were

made national heroes. On interviewing a survivor, however, García Márquez discovered that there had been no storm; but the officers had so overloaded the boat with contraband household appliances that it had capsized, leaving the Everyman hero adrift on his raft in the ocean. García Márquez and his editor at *El Espectador* were both aware that the articles would embarrass the armed forces; but the reaction was more sordid than anticipated. García Márquez was dogged by a man who claimed to admire his writing, but warned that 'he was doing a disservice to his country by supporting the Communists' and that his informant had 'infiltrated the Armed Forces in the service of the Soviet Union'. *Living to Tell the Tale* takes the story up to 1955 when, after a series of such incidents, García Márquez leaves Colombia for a four-year exile in Europe, where he would write *In Evil Hour*. It ends with a cliffhanger that points towards the life to come in Volume Two: the letter of reply from Mercedes Barcha, his future wife.

Many of these details—the family history and its recreation in his later work; initiations into literature, sex, journalism and politics; the insights about his creative methods—have already been documented, in *The Fragrance of Guava* and elsewhere. But the portrait of the writer that emerges remains an engaging one, steady and self-assured; even the most intimate admissions reveal a man content with a life he considers well lived. From the vantage point of his seventy-five years, García Márquez pays homage to friends, lovers and mentors; makes some disarming confessions regarding his phobias and manias; and gracefully settles a few old scores.

There are many fond memories of the bordellos where he would carouse with friends and colleagues, and of the kindness of the prostitutes with whom he shared the town's cheapest hotel. Sex, and its free celebration, constitute an important part of García Márquez's self-identity, as of his vision of political liberation. Though he objects to his father's and grandfather's patriarchal attitudes towards their daughters—whose own sexuality is reduced to a matter of paternal honour—he applauds their virility in siring innumerable children, before and after wedlock, with the grudging acquiescence of their wives; both of whom eventually welcomed these illegitimate offspring into their households. But his claim that women 'sustain the world while we men mess it up with our historical brutality' can scarcely suffice as a politically aware account of the mass degradation forced upon lower-class Colombian women by the population displacements of the civil wars and *La Violencia*; and now again, with Uribe's counter-insurgency and fumigation campaigns. Keenly aware of the plight of the young men who came to peaceful Barranquilla as political refugees from the violence of other cities, García Márquez seems to overlook that of their sisters—many of whom became prostitutes as widows or orphans of the same repression, driven from their homes to fill the bars and brothels he frequents.

In many places, *Living to Tell the Tale* reads like a novel—fashioned with the same humour, themes, structures and poetic inflections as García Márquez's narrative fiction. If some of the rhetorical devices feel a little stale—there must be over a hundred uses of 'not this, but that' constructions to emphasize the unexpected—there are passages here as riveting as any that he has put on paper. Perhaps even more so, in his account of the assassination of Gaitán or of his own struggles against censorship, where the urgency of the historical moment, the combined sense of personal risk and social significance, is not mitigated or diffused by the subterfuges of magical realism. There is something refreshing about these sections which deploy García Márquez's considerable literary resources stripped of any flights of fancy.

In general, though, it is the aesthetic of magical realism that is exemplified; underscoring García Márquez's claim that, in Latin America and the Caribbean, 'artists have had to invent very little, and perhaps their problem has been the exact opposite: to make their reality credible'. Many of the characters he recalls from childhood hold the wildest fantasies as firm beliefs, while he affects a tone, tiresome at times, of accepting them as reality himself; or of having experienced a few fantasies of his own. Yet as Fredric Jameson has suggested for the works of fiction, this brand of magical realism was born in an environment in which precapitalist and nascent capitalist modes overlap, involving—and this is another insight on García Márquez's handling of time—'the articulated superposition of whole layers of the past within the present': Indian or pre-Columbian realities, the colonial era and slavery, the Bolivarian struggle for independence, *caudillismo*, the War of a Thousand Days, the period of direct American domination. Indeed, the story of Aracataca and of his family can only be understood in terms of the false sense of progress brought by the United Fruit Company, before it devastated the region's economy and ecology.

One might extend Jameson's point by suggesting an activist intention of sorts, perhaps underwritten by García Márquez's own emphasis on the Spanish classics. This brand of magical realism could be seen as a political secularization of a central theme of Golden Age literature—in *Don Quixote* of course, but in baroque poetry as well: the realization that, if life is a dream, nevertheless the blurring of boundaries between fantasy and reality does not exonerate humanity from its moral commitments. It goes without saying that morality, for García Márquez, translates into social and political rather than religious terms. But the point can still be made: for García Márquez, literature is a vehicle through which to understand a given reality; his brand of magical realism is informed by his political commitment. How he first began to make connexions between the two is one of the underlying themes of this memoir.

Elements of García Márquez's political education are powerfully reconstructed here. A visceral anti-imperialist sentiment was implanted early, by his grandfather's descriptions of the 1928 massacre of the striking United Fruit Company workers. The same viewpoint underlies his interpretation of Colombia's geopolitical predicament:

Colombia had always been a country with a Caribbean identity which opened to the world by means of the umbilical cord of Panamá. Its forced amputation condemned us to be what we are today: a nation with an Andean mentality whose circumstances favour the canal between two oceans belonging not to us but to the United States.

At the boarding school in Zipaquirá, on the outskirts of Bogotá, García Márquez recalls some of his progressive teachers as living expressions of magical realism—Manuel Cuello del Río, for example, a radical Marxist who 'admired Lin Yutang and believed in apparitions of the dead'. One of them lent him a book in which he found a citation, attributed to Lenin, that he would never forget: 'if you do not become involved in politics, politics will eventually become involved in you'. At this stage, however, literature still appeared as an escape from a depressing social reality, rather than an engagement with it. In retrospect at least, Pablo Neruda's arrival in the late 1940s—bringing to Bogotá the conviction that 'poetry had to be a political weapon'—was a challenge to this quietism. García Márquez considers it 'a heartening symptom of the power of poetry during those years' that the satirical sonnets Neruda composed in Bogotá on the subject of local intellectuals were taken so seriously; especially those that poked fun at Laureano Gómez's reactionary politics, even before he became Colombia's head of state.

But it was the events of 9 April 1948 and after that would signal his political coming of age. The most gripping section of *Living to Tell the Tale* is its account of Gaitán's assassination on that day, which triggered the furious protests and brutal repression of the *Bogotazo*—one of the defining moments of the decades palsied by *La Violencia*, during which at least 200,000 people were reputed killed (García Márquez suggests the figure might be much higher). Hobsbawm and others have argued that the conflicts can only be understood in the context of a frustrated social revolution—when 'revolutionary tensions are neither dissipated by peaceful economic development, nor redirected to create new and revolutionary structures. The armies of death, the scores of uprooted, the physically and mentally mutilated, are the price Colombia has paid for that failure.' Though García Márquez would come to interpret the events along similar lines, he had initially been sceptical—'I had allowed myself the arrogance of not believing in Gaitán', as he puts it; but on hearing him speak, 'I understood

all at once that he had gone beyond the Spanish country and was inventing a lingua franca for everyone'. The 20-year-old, then a cub reporter on the Bogotá *Espectador*, took part in the 'march of silence' against government repression, organized by Gaitán some months before the assassination—his first political act: 'I had come without political conviction, drawn by the curiosity of the silence, and the sudden knot of tears in my throat took me by surprise'. With hindsight, he sees Gaitán as having radicalized his election campaign of the previous year in a way

that went beyond the historic division of the country into Liberals and Conservatives, [to make] a more realistic distinction between the exploiters and the exploited. With his historic slogan, 'Let's get them!', and his supernatural energy, he sowed the seeds of resistance even in the most remote places with a gigantic campaign of agitation that continued gaining ground until . . . it was on the verge of being an authentic social revolution.

Gaitán had been on his way to lunch with *El Espectador's* editor on the morning of the assassination. García Márquez heard the news within minutes and rushed to the scene of the crime. Angry bootblacks were already using their wooden boxes to bang down the gates of the chemist's shop where the police had locked the assailant, to protect him from the mob. 'A tall man, very much in control of himself and wearing an irreproachable grey suit as if he were going to a wedding, urged them on with well-calculated shouts'—and was driven away in a 'too new' car, as soon as Gaitán's apparent killer had been dragged off by the crowd. It was only later that 'it occurred to me that the man had managed to have a false assassin killed, in order to protect the identity of the real one.' García Márquez recalls the rebellion that ensued:

The smoke from the fires had darkened the air, and the clouded sky was a sinister blanket. Maddened hordes, armed with machetes and all kinds of tools stolen from the hardware stores, set fire to the businesses along Carrera Séptima, with the help of mutinous police officers . . . Wherever we went we stumbled across household appliances, over bottles of expensive brands of whisky and all kinds of exotic drinks that the mobs beheaded with their machetes.

Government troops raked the Plaza de Bolívar with machine-gun fire. A group of Gaitán supporters from the University proclaimed themselves a revolutionary *junta*. The Communists—'the only ones who seemed to act with any political sense'—directed the crowd, 'like traffic police', towards the centres of power. In this chaos, who should appear but the 20-year-old Fidel Castro, in Bogotá as a University of Havana delegate to a progressive students' congress, and with an appointment to meet Gaitán that afternoon.

Castro, who can do no wrong in García Márquez's eyes, is presented as a sensible pragmatist, trying to help stop the killings in the streets: 'One would have to know him to imagine his desperation'. He rushes to a pro-Gaitán police division, holed up in their garrison, and tries to persuade them, without success, that any force that stays in its barracks is lost: 'He proposed that they take their men out to struggle in the streets for the maintenance of order and a more equitable system'.

Living to Tell the Tale suggests that García Márquez's intentions as a novelist, journalist and political activist constitute a coherent project; but a lot is left unsaid, and much might be read between the lines. The official image is of the most famous of all living Latin American writers, who has happily reconciled his literary vocation and global prestige with his political commitments: Caribbean *joie de vivre* goes hand in hand with a broad sense of compassion for hunger, poverty, human misery and social injustice. To the right-wing media—enamoured of his fiction but contemptuous of his affiliations—he has written: 'as a man, I am indivisible and my political position reflects the same ideology with which I write my books'. But although he has often declared himself a sympathizer of the Colombian Communist Party, García Márquez has also wanted to maintain a safe distance from political militancy—explaining, in *The Fragrance of Guava*: 'My relationship with the Communists has had many ups and downs. We've often been at loggerheads because every time I adopt a stance they don't like, their newspapers really have a go at me. But I've never publicly condemned them, even at the worst moments.'

Another, still more sanitized reading could show him as a man who values friendship over politics, and whose public interventions have stressed 'reconciliation' in the interests of peace. There are anecdotes here to suggest that his Nobel Prize status has made him a statesman of sorts, with access to political players across the spectrum from Castro to Kissinger and Clinton. It is clear that he wants to be seen as a man who has been able to reach—by virtue of his craft or prestige—spheres that might have otherwise been averse to the significance of his underlying message. And if he sometimes plays the naïve by leaving hidden the full thrust of his political views, he has been sanctioned in so doing by the most important leaders of the Latin American Left. There is a telling moment in the early 1950s when Gilberto Vieira—'the most prominent of the founders of the Communist Party . . . the man most wanted by the country's secret services'—contacts García Márquez from his clandestine hideout in Bogotá to let him know that he has been reading his newspaper articles with great attention, and has even identified the young journalist's anonymous pieces in order to 'interpret their hidden meanings'. It is from Vieira himself that García Márquez is exonerated from joining the Party, or from any direct political involvement:

'he agreed that the best service I could offer the country was to continue in the same way without compromising myself with anyone in any kind of political militancy'.

But if several meanings can be read from García Márquez's statements of his political positions, it is impossible to pin him down. Though he makes little of the years he spent as a law student it is clear that he is also mounting a pre-emptive defence in *Living to Tell the Tale* against those who might accuse him of either too much or too little radicalism. Perhaps something similar could be said of his literary achievements which, if one reads carefully between the lines, can be interpreted either as what Gerald Martin has described, in *Journeys Through the Labyrinth*, as depictions of 'the prehistory before the dawn of proletarian consciousness'; or as wild expressions of the Latin American imagination, if one would prefer.

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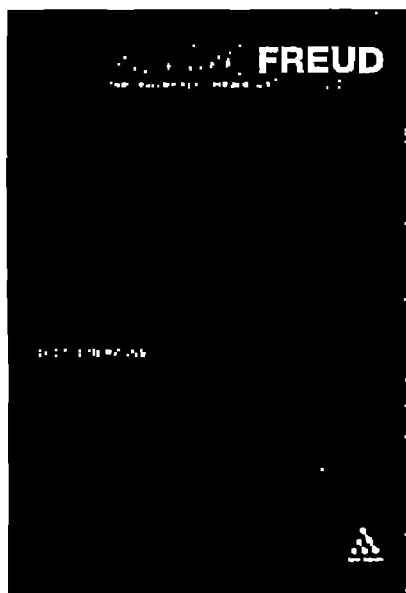
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David Craven, *Art and Revolution in Latin America, 1910–1990*
 Yale University Press: New Haven and London 2002, \$55, hardback
 228 pp, 0 300 08211 8

TONY WOOD

TROPICAL VANGUARDS

The formative events of Latin America's twentieth century were the revolutions in Mexico and Cuba—the former marking the first stage in the unravelling of the continent's liberal oligarchies, the latter opening a phase of renewed resistance to us imperialism. Though the Mexican Revolution was gradually domesticated, as the social conflicts unleashed in 1910 were absorbed into what would be a remarkably durable corporative structure, the debates it sparked had a tremendous impact in the Western Hemisphere and beyond; over the course of the next few decades Mexico City became a cultural centre to rival Buenos Aires or São Paulo. The overthrow of Batista in 1959 had a comparable galvanizing effect, with Havana now the focal point for urgent discussions on questions of national identity and international solidarity. The success of the Cuban revolution also provided oppositional forces in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua with a template for insurrection that met with resounding success in 1979, with the toppling of Somoza.

What was the cultural impact of these events? David Craven's *Art and Revolution in Latin America* follows the different trajectories of art in Mexico, Cuba and Nicaragua during their revolutionary periods, discussing both the policies for art and education adopted by the new regimes and the artistic output of the time. The three cases form an interesting set of contrasts: Mexican art was dominated from 1920–40 by muralists sponsored by a state seeking a legitimating ideology; Cuban culture, however, was marked by a wide-ranging pluralism that drew on mainstream us and European trends, colonial Spanish motifs and Afro-Cuban traditions. These had been present in the Cuban modernism that began to gather pace in the late 20s,

but the revolution greatly improved popular access to the arts and education, for the most part fostering diversity and lively public debate. Cultural policy in Nicaragua was greatly influenced by the Cuban experience, and the FSLN had planned as early as 1969 to democratize both consumption and production of art; the result was a brief flowering of popular and public art that was progressively undermined by the regime's economic isolation during the late 80s.

Although Craven can add little to the considerable literature on the Mexican muralists, his readings of individual paintings contain many intelligent insights, and are notable for their emphasis on the political and social context in which these epic works were executed. His abundantly illustrated surveys of Cuba and Nicaragua also perform a useful service to Anglophone readers unacquainted with artistic developments in these countries (though the latter does retread much of the same ground as his earlier *The New Concept of Art and Popular Culture in Nicaragua Since the Revolution* in 1979). But his discussion of Cuban art stops arbitrarily in 1989, and the lack of an account of trends that have emerged in the *periodo especial* detracts from its overall value. Similarly, it would have been instructive to follow the fate of culture after the FSLN's ejection from power in 1990. More significant, however, is the absence of any synthesizing chapter that would draw Craven's three cases together, explaining their relationships with one another, and with the divergent experiences of other countries in the region. The result is a wide-ranging but unfocused work that leaves unexplored the wider question of how art and revolution relate to Latin America's experience of modernity.

Carlos Fuentes has described the Mexican Revolution as three revolutions in one: an agrarian revolt, with Emiliano Zapata as its figurehead; a middle-class struggle for civil rights and social democracy; and an incipient proletarian revolution that was staved off by integration into the state apparatus. The first revolution was defeated by an alliance between the second and third, sealed with the election of Álvaro Obregón as president in 1920. The following year the philosopher José Vasconcelos was appointed to oversee Obregón's vastly increased spending on education, and became the sponsor of an ambitious public art programme, luring Diego Rivera back from Europe with commissions for murals; other leading artists, such as José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, were also recruited at this time. Much like Lunacharsky in Soviet Russia, Vasconcelos had rather staid bourgeois tastes, but encouraged an artistic pluralism that gave free rein to his employees' more radical inclinations. Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros—*los tres grandes*—were among the signatories of the 1922 manifesto of the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors, which vowed to create 'ideological works of art for the people', seeking to circumvent the

market mechanisms of capitalist society through direct visual contact with the masses. The result was a mode of painterly expression that dominated the Mexican art scene for decades to come; while it did not petrify into an insipid official idiom as did Soviet Socialist Realism, its overt radicalism provided a form of ideological cover for a regime that, after the end of Cárdenas's term in 1940, was increasingly bent on a conservative project of modernization.

The muralist movement began in decorous, slightly mystical vein, but became more stridently socialist as the 20s wore on and its protagonists found a vocabulary that combined exploration of indigenous traditions with the urgency of the turbulent conjuncture. In his murals at the Ministry of Education (1923–28) Rivera deployed the Cubist procedures and lessons learnt from Cézanne and, strikingly, Giotto during his spell in Europe, merging these elements with the compositional strategies of Aztec codices. Craven argues that Rivera's sumptuous, elemental frescoes for the chapel of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Chapingo (1926) embody an aesthetic of uneven development—re-engaging with progressive features of the pre-Columbian past while embracing modern technological means for national economic advancement. From here Rivera moved to what Craven terms 'epic modernism', in the teeming murals at the Palacio Nacional (1929–35), where 'history never slows enough to become transparent'. This was a period that saw a shift from social stalemate, in the aftermath of the Cristero revolt against Plutarco Elías Calles's anticlerical reforms, to the renewal of the revolution under Cárdenas; the Palacio Nacional murals partake of the tensions unfolding around them—the clashes between workers and police depicted in the south stairway actually took place as Rivera was working. With good reason, Trotsky was to describe these murals as 'a living part of the class struggle'.

If Rivera's work was the affirmative expression of Mexico's revolutionary state ideology, Orozco gave vent to the darker feelings aroused by the upheavals of 1910–40. His slanting diagonals and moody palette complement the apocalyptic overtones of his work, in which one can identify debts to El Greco, Austro-German Expressionism and the popular engravings of José Guadalupe Posada. The severity of the 1926 frescoes at the Escuela Preparatoria Nacional gave way to fiery tumult in his works of the 30s at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City (1934) and the Palacio de Gobierno in Guadalajara (1937). While Rivera's eirenic visions of pre-Columbian Mexico gradually shifted from dynamic process of recovery to nostalgic reverie, Orozco seemed best to register the sense of disappointment at the institutionalization of the revolution.

Siqueiros did not paint his first mural in Mexico until 1939, but his unrelenting use of rich colour and vertiginous perspectives was to prove

influential across Latin America into the 80s, notably in Nicaragua. Less well known is the connexion Siqueiros provides between Mexican muralism and Abstract Expressionism: his 1936 experimental workshop in New York was attended by Jackson Pollock, and introduced several American artists to industrial paints and spray guns, and also to the vast compositional scale on which *Ab Ex* was to operate. Indeed, the art that was the quintessential expression of the coming of the 'American Century' in a sense provides a subterranean continuity between Craven's three case studies, since the formal strategies of abstraction were to serve the cause of anti-authoritarianism in Cuba and Nicaragua in the 50s and 60s. For example, the Cuban painters of the *Los Once* group—notably Raúl Martínez—embraced abstraction in the 1950s, as what Craven terms a 'pictorial negation of the established order'.

Alongside the anti-Batista currents of the 50s, many of the leading lights of Cuban artistic and literary modernism's first flourish—Victor Manuel, Amelia Peláez, Alejo Carpentier, Nicolás Guillén—either stayed on in Cuba after 1959 or, in the case of the last two, returned there. In contrast to Mexico, where revolutionary murals had provided legitimation for a state in the process of consolidation, Cuban cultural policy was nominally aimed, in Che Guevara's terms, at the creation of the New Man of the twenty-first century. The pedagogy of Paulo Freire was another important reference point, stressing dialogical methods—hence the prominence of public discussion in Cuban cultural life after the revolution. But what Craven terms the 'expanded aesthetic' of Cuba is also the product of its particular historical experience, in which an intrinsic hybridity now combined with internationalist ideals. The result was a pluralism and openness to tendencies arising outside the island, which were then often inflected with the local accents of Afro-Cuban culture—as in the paintings of Lam, René Portocarrero or Manuel Mendive.

The trajectory Craven traces in his survey runs from an explosion of Pop Art in the 60s, embodying the anti-authoritarian spirit of the time, to stagnation in the 70s under the joint influences of Soviet aesthetics and a plodding Hyperrealism derived from us trends. However, a new generation appeared on the scene in 1981 with the *Volumen Uno* show, demonstrating the continued vitality of Cuban art through the sheer proliferation of forms, their irreverence and informality. But there was also a seeming lack of consensus as to what radical art should be, and the question arises as to whether what Craven identifies as a healthy pluralism in the late 80s became, in the 90s, a symptom of cultural disorientation. The Cuban critic Gerardo Mosquera has referred to Cuban artists of the 90s as the *mala hierba* generation—the phrase means both 'weed' and 'bad influence'. Although Mosquera claimed merely to be denoting their ability to survive in the difficult conditions of the

periodo especial, another prominent Cuban critic, Osvaldo Sánchez, saw the prominence of anthropological themes and motifs from Santerfa in Cuban art of the 90s as expressing 'the spiritual ruin of revolutionary thinking'.

Such matters sadly fall beyond the scope of Craven's discussion, which moves on to a more upbeat overview of the arts in Nicaragua. The 1979 insurgency rapidly became known as a 'revolution of poets'—a large proportion of the FSLN's first cabinet were published writers, and the democratization of culture played a correspondingly important role in their revolutionary programme. The literature of the Latin American Boom was also a key influence—the open-ended structure of Júlío Cortázar's *Rayuela*, for instance, exemplified the dialogical spirit the FSLN sought to foster—while the prominence of feminist writers such as Gioconda Belli and Daisy Zamora in Nicaraguan revolutionary culture distinguished it from its Mexican and Cuban predecessors. Perhaps the key figure, however, was Ernesto Cardenal, a priest and poet who came to Marxism via liberation theology, and who served as the Sandinistas' culture minister from 1979–88. His aim was not to create a simple art for all, but to provide 'an education of the people to the point where they understand the complexity of art'. The community he established at Solentiname in the 60s was in many ways the prototype for FSLN policy: it provided poetry workshops that were replicated on a national scale during his tenure, and the primitivist school that developed there prefigured the explosion of painting in this mode after 1979. These non-hierarchical, decentralized compositions took on, in Craven's words, the 'material texture of the popular classes', providing a living link between artistic production and the artisanal population.

Craven makes clear the Sandinistas' considerable successes in opening up the process of cultural production to the population as a whole. Yet it is less clear what the revolution's effect was on professional cultural producers active before 1979. As in Cuba, the artistic avant-garde had been opposed to the established order, and the painters of Managua's Praxis group embraced Abstract Expressionism in the 60s for much the same reasons as their Cuban counterparts. The archaeological record of Nicaraguan pre-Columbian culture was too fragmentary, however, for them to meld indigenous culture with mainstream modernism to the same extent as the Mexican muralists. Abstraction remained the dominant visual language, though the work of Armando Morales portrays psychological landscapes reminiscent of de Chirico, with a recurrent weathered texture that suggests the temporal dislocations of magical realism.

With the FSLN's increasing budgetary difficulties in the second half of the 80s—the country ground down by the US's murderous covert war—arts funding was cut and non-professional participation in the arts declined; professional artists had to sell works in commercial galleries once again,

reinforcing the divide between producers and consumers as the Sandinistas began to reconfigure themselves as a social-democratic party. The FSLN's political defeat by Violeta Chamorro in the 1990 elections found a symbolic counterpart when Arnoldo Alemán, then Mayor of Managua—currently awaiting trial on corruption charges relating to his tenure as the country's president from 1997–2002—destroyed many of the city's revolutionary murals, painted both by Nicaraguans such as Alejandro Canales and by artists from Italy and México, or international brigades from Chile.

Craven takes 1990 as the end-point of Latin America's 'short twentieth century', marking the temporary closure of its revolutionary phase. Yet the lack of an overall concept of the relations between the two abstractions of its title leaves the book's chronology strangely under-motivated. The missing term in Craven's analysis is surely modernity, the social experience through which revolutionary politics and art were articulated. All three of the cultural programmes he describes were closely bound up with aspirations within each of these societies towards an engagement with modernity that would take place on terms dictated by popular priorities. Art formed part of the argument the revolutions were trying to win.

Following on from this, the implicit parallel between the failure of revolutionary projects and the exhaustion of modernism that lurks throughout the book should be tied to the transition from modernity to the postmodern condition, and the abandonment of grand narratives and collective social projects. In this optic, the limited achievements of the Sandinistas appear as a last gasp of modernist aspiration rather than new growth. Craven's omission of Cuban art of the 90s, meanwhile, comes to seem like an attempt to skirt the implications of the global ontological change. A discussion of the effects of this shift on Cuba's artistic production would have raised more troubling questions for current artistic practice than Craven's historical surveys. The critic Coco Fusco has suggested that recent Cuban works—Kcho's fleet of rafts, 'Regata', for instance—may merely provide the capitalist art market with easily digestible morsels of 'otherness'. Where hybridity once served as the expression of an energizing social flux, developments of the 90s suggest that it may now be condemned to the whims of the market on the other side of Florida Strait.

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